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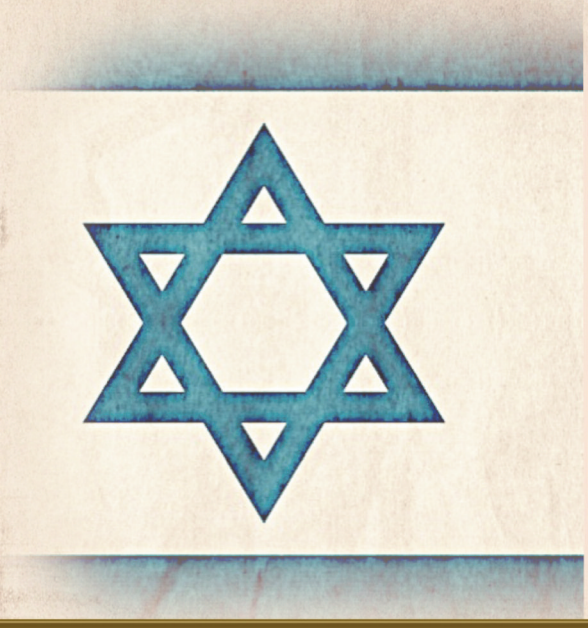
Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church



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UNDERSTANDING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

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PUBLISHING

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

It is our conviction that one of the most ignored, and yet most important cornerstones for accurately interpreting the Bible is the understanding of the distinction between Israel and the Church. When this distinction is not understood, the downstream implications are disastrous, and inevitably lead to mistaken doctrine in key areas of Bible interpretation.

On the other hand, when this distinction is observed, the rest of the Bible will fall right into place (so long as proper interpretive methods are used elsewhere also!). So, our assertion is that the proper understanding of this topic – the distinction between Israel and the Church – is a key, but often missing puzzle piece that is foundational to proper Biblical understanding.

Without this understanding, it will be impossible for any student of the Bible to have an accurate perception of God's purpose and plans for the future, much less for the believer in the present Church Age. This issue of the distinction between national Israel and the Church is in many ways closely tied in with the proper understanding of Biblical eschatology, or the prophetic Biblical study of the end-times. All of these necessary understandings are ultimately derived from having a sound hermeneutic (or method of Bible interpretation).

Unfortunately, many different interpretive lenses have been embraced by Christians down through the centuries, that when looked through, will dramatically affect and change how one understands the Bible. But we advocate something radical – the idea that the Bible actually means what it says. Simple as that! We accurately understand what the Bible is saying through the simple and plain reading of its words – in context, of course. In other words, we utilize what may be called the consistent use of a literal-grammatical-historical approach to Bible interpretation. By doing this, we are allowing the scriptures to tell us what God means by what He actually says. We are not allegorizing away the meaning as some do, and making ourselves the ultimate determiners of its meaning. We are simply allowing the Bible to speak, and are recognizing what it says. When we do this, we have a solid foundation for properly understanding the inspired words of scripture.

Keeping these principles in mind, we will be able to clearly uncover what the Bible communicates regarding this topic of the distinction between Israel and the Church as separate entities in God's program. Understanding this distinction will act as a necessary key that helps us rightly divide the word, as Paul instructs us to do in 2 Timothy.

> Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
>
> -2 Timothy 2:15

As we open our exploration of the distinction between Israel and the Church, let's clearly establish our premises and define our terms.

Our Premises

We have two overarching premises that will guide our perceptions. As we go through this study, we will show that both of these points are established by scripture and leave us no room to form our own alternative ideas. In fact, as we will see, properly understanding these concepts allows the whole of scripture to fall neatly into place. But on

the other hand, without an accurate perception of these issues, there will arise perpetual confusion. So, let's discuss these two premises.

- First, we assert on the basis of scripture that the nation of Israel and the Church each have distinct origins, purposes, and destinies. Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel. The Church has not "replaced" Israel; Israel as a nation still has a purpose and destiny in God's plan.

- Second, it seems clear from scripture that in God's prophetic program for humanity, Israel and the Church are mutually exclusive – and God deals with them mutually exclusively. Each has its own prophetic time-clock in God's timeline. A chess clock is a good example of this. In formal chess matches, there's a clock for each of the two players. When one player's clock is running, the other's is automatically stopped – and vice versa. This is essentially how God operates with Israel and the Church as distinct entities in His plan.

Note: At the outset, we should clarify that while national Israel and the Church are distinct entities, any individual Jew who comes to faith in Christ during the Church Age becomes part of the Church (not Israel). There are no national or ethnic distinctions within the context of the Church. This will be explained further as we continue.

So, these are the two main premises we will use as our foundation. This concept of the distinction between the Church and Israel is a theme that is interwoven through the Bible. As we will point out, the Church is a hidden mystery in the Old Testament, and her origin and destiny are only revealed in the New. Israel is described in detail in the Old Testament – her origin and history are recorded, but also her prophetic destiny. In the New Testament, Israel's future destiny in God's plan is made even clearer to us, as we will see throughout this study.

We will begin our exploration of the distinctions between these two entities by recognizing the covenants and promises God has made throughout scripture. Additionally, when you understand the greater scope of God's timeline and purposes for the structure and scheme of eschatology (the study of the end-times), the distinctions clearly emerge. Without this insight, it will be impossible to understand the Bible as a whole, not to mention eschatology. This is where Daniel's seventy week prophecy becomes foundational to our recognition of God's prophetic timeline, especially in regards to the topic of this study.

As we will see, this incredible prophecy given to Daniel in Daniel Chapter 9 turns out to provide us with the prophetic "scaffolding" that reveals the nature of of God's time-clock for Israel, as well as for the Church. When one is active, the other is dormant, and vice versa. At a later point in this study, we will engage in a deeper-dive on this subject. You will see for yourself how critical the topic of this study is for maintaining an accurate perception of the Biblical portrayal of God's timeline for human history – both past and future.

Let's now define several relevant terms and concepts as precisely as we can in order to avoid any downstream confusion.

Terms

The following terms and concepts will be discussed throughout this study. Let's define how they will be used for the purposes of this study.

Israel: What do we mean when we use the term "Israel" in this study? Israel is a national identity that began with Abraham, Isaac and then Jacob, who was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel is a specific nation chosen by God to play a specific role in his overall program for humanity. As a nation, Israel is sustained by a number of covenant promises (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Romans 9:6; 11:28). Unbelieving Jews were physical children of Abraham and spiritual children of the devil (John 8:37-44). Believing Jews were Old Testament saints

such as the prophets and those who obeyed the Law and covenants of God.

Jew: What do we mean when we use the term "Jew" in this study? Some mistakenly try to create a distinction between Israel and the term Jew, claiming that Jew only means a descendant of the tribe of Judah. There are those who wish to create entire doctrines based on this false idea.

Easton's Bible Dictionary is helpful, outlining for us the following lengthy but thorough definition for the term "Jew":

> The name derived from the patriarch Judah, at first given to one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the separate kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jeremiah 32:12; 38:19; 40:11 and 41:3), in contradistinction from those belonging to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were called Israelites.
>
> During the Captivity, and after the Restoration, the name, however, was extended to all the Hebrew nation without distinction (Esther 3:6; 3:10; Daniel 3:8; 3:12; Ezra 4:12; 5:1 and 5:5).
>
> Originally this people were called Hebrews (Genesis 39:14; 40:15; Exodus 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 1 Samuel 4:6 4:9, et al.), but after the Exile this name fell into disuse.
>
> There are three names used in the New Testament to designate this people …
>
> -Jews, as regards their nationality, to distinguish them from Gentiles.
>
> -Hebrews, with regard to their language and education, to distinguish them from Hellenists, i.e., Jews who spoke the Greek language.
>
> -Israelites, as respects their sacred privileges as the chosen people of God.[1]

So, in this study, we will at times refer to members of the distinct group called Israel as "Jews." Understand that we are using this term as the Bible does – as a synonym of the terms "Israel," "Israelites," and "Hebrews."

Gentiles: The word Gentile is an English translation of the

Hebrew word *goyim* ("people, nations") and the Greek word *ethne* ("nations, people groups, people"). The Latin Vulgate translated these words as *gentilis*, and this word was then carried over into English as "Gentile." The term refers to a person who is not a Jew.[2]

From the Jewish perspective, Gentiles were often seen as pagans who did not know the true God. During Jesus's time, many Jews took such pride in their cultural and religious heritage that they considered Gentiles "unclean," calling them "dogs" and "the uncircumcision." Gentiles and the half-Gentile Samaritans were basically viewed as enemies that were to be shunned (John 4:9; 18:28; Acts 10:28).

The Church: The Church is a called-out assembly of believers out of every nation, who have been initiated into the body of Christ by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The identity of the Church is the beloved bride of Christ.

Members of the Church include those saved through the gospel plan – beginning at the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was first poured out on the believers (Acts 2), and ending with those who will be removed from earth in the supernatural catching away of the Church (known as the Rapture – 1 Thessalonians 4:17, et al.).

Believing Jews/Gentiles prior to Pentecost, believing Jews/Gentiles during the Tribulation, and mortal believing Jews/Gentiles during the earthly Kingdom reign of Christ (the Millennium) are not members of the Church. There are saved Old Testament saints as well as saved Tribulation saints. They are not part of the Church. The Church Age on earth began at Pentecost and will end at the Rapture.

The Rapture: The Rapture is an important term to define, as it serves as the terminal event of the Church Age. The Rapture is the next prophetic event to take place on the horizon for the Church – it is called our "blessed hope," and what we yearn for (Titus 2:12-13). As mentioned, the Rapture is the supernatural "catching away" of the Church from earth to heaven, and includes the instantaneous transition from a physical body to a supernatural "glorified" body (1 Thessalonians 4:17, et al.). At this time, the dead in Christ (or deceased Christians) will be resurrected first, and receive their glorified bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Replacement Theology: Replacement Theology (also known as Supersessionism) essentially teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Adherents of Replacement Theology believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel. Replacement Theology teaches that the Church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled allegorically in the Christian Church. The prophecies in scripture concerning, for instance, the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God's blessing for the Church.[3]

The overall problem with this view is that God made a number of **unconditional** promises and covenants with Israel in the Old Testament. Replacement Theology neglects these promises that God made to Israel, and therefore challenges the integrity of God. It makes God a liar.

It also results from an incorrect hermeneutic, in which adherents of this belief allegorize or spiritualize the promises God made to Israel instead of interpreting the plain and literal meaning. In the Bible, Israel always means Israel. But in their view, Israel becomes spiritual code language to mean the Church. And instead of understanding the plain meanings of these promises, they instead come up with spiritual meanings of their own choosing, which they then apply to the Church. Therefore, they are able to completely avoid acknowledging Israel's present and future relevance in God's program.

Premillennial Dispensationalism: Although we will not be using this term much throughout this study, it is the lens through which we rightly interpret eschatology, or the study of the end-times, and therefore is useful to define. Everything that follows in this study will follow this system of interpretation, which we believe to clearly be the scriptural one. Premillennial Dispensationalism is the natural end-result of a literal-grammatical-historical-contextual, or plain interpretation of the Bible.

The label "premillennial" derives from the fact that when one interprets the Bible in this way (without trying to allegorize the

meaning of the text), the end-result is the recognition that there is a future literal Millennium of time in which Christ will rule earth from David's Throne in Jerusalem, as the scriptures plainly prophesy.

The name "Dispensationalism" comes from the recognition that God has dealt with mankind in a number of different ways throughout history. We call these different periods "dispensations," meaning different ages, characterized by, among other things, the different covenants God has made with man throughout history. In other words, Dispensationalism is the understanding that God administers His plan for mankind in various stages, or dispensations. It recognizes how these different ages involve different ways in which God has dealt with mankind in His ultimate plan for the redemption of mankind and of the earth.

Two of the essential pillars of Dispensationalism are especially relevant to this study:

#1 – Consistent Literal Interpretation

In other words, this refers to consistently interpreting the Bible using the normal or plain meanings that the text is communicating, instead of spiritualizing or allegorizing the meanings.

#2 – Israel and the Church are Distinct

The second essential pillar of Dispensationalism is the topic of this study. Dispensationalists believe the Bible teaches that God's single program for human history includes a distinct plan for Israel and a distinct plan for the Church.[4]

So, we believe that Dispensationalism is a system of theology that is essential to correctly understand the Bible, especially Bible prophecy. Without utilizing these foundational principles of Biblical interpretation, we will arrive at the wrong conclusion concerning the topic of this study.

The term Dispensationalism is just a man-made term or label for

what we believe is the correct approach to understanding and interpreting scripture. Since the topic of this study is one of the foundational essentials of this method of interpretation, we thought it important to draw your attention to. Many people are Dispensationalists without even knowing it. If you **consistently** interpret the Bible literally, and believe Israel has a future, you view the Bible dispensationally.

Before moving on, let's do a quick run through the Premillennial/Dispensational understanding of eschatology. We will focus on this in detail later on in our study, but it's important to enter in with a basic understanding. Correctly understanding the timeline for eschatology goes hand-in-hand with understanding the distinction between Israel and the Church, and how God has operated within the theater of humanity for the past four thousand years – and how he will operate in the future.

Our outline for this understanding is given in Daniel 9. This chapter records how in the mid-500s BC, the prophet Daniel was given the seventy-weeks prophecy, which declared seventy weeks or heptads of years that would take place for Israel and Jerusalem. In other words, this refers to a total of 490 years (70 x 7). A beginning point and ending point are provided for marking the first through the sixty-ninth weeks of years.

The sixty-ninth week of years ended with the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in 33 AD, just days prior to His crucifixion. According to the prophecy, it is clear that this prophetic time-clock for national Israel stopped with the completion of the sixty-ninth week, leaving one future week – the seventieth week – to still be completed. But after the sixty-ninth week, something "unexpected" happened. After Israel killed her Messiah, rejecting His offer of the Messianic Kingdom (which had been prophesied of throughout the Old Testament), this prophetic seventy-week program of God for Israel was paused, and God instead introduced an interim program called the Church, as the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost of that same year – 33 AD (Acts 2).

Subsequently, the gospel was to be spread to all nations, as God's

focus temporarily shifted from that of national Israel to His new work called the Church, which focused on all nations. And so, at the Triumphal Entry, the time-clock for Israel's seventy-week countdown was paused and a gap period we call the Church Age was inserted. In 70 AD, the final harbinger of this shift took place as Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were eventually scattered to the uttermost parts of the earth in what is termed the Diaspora. The Church Age has been in effect since 33 AD, and will last until the closing event of this age – the Rapture, or supernatural catching away of the Church to heaven described in scripture (Rom. 11:25; I Thessalonians 4:14-18; et al.).

Dispensationalists understand that God's time-clock for the Church will stop with the Rapture, and either immediately or soon after, God's time-clock for national Israel will again begin, as there remains one final week of years – the seventieth week – to be completed. During this time, Israel will once again become the primary focus of God's plan during this final seven-year "week" of time often called the Tribulation, or Daniel's seventieth week.

This final week for Israel, the Tribulation (Revelation 6-19), will be a time of great trouble for the world as God's wrath is poured out – but will be especially focused upon Israel, especially the second half of this seven-year period. Scripture says that the Tribulation begins with the Antichrist enforcing a covenant, which he afterwards apparently breaks midway through the seven years – an event known as the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).

After this midpoint abomination, the latter three and a half years of the Tribulation will be a time of unparalleled distress in human history, particularly for the Jews (Jeremiah 30:7; Zechariah 13:8). In fact, Jesus calls it the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:21-22. We will find out in this study that one primary purpose of the Tribulation is to drive the nation of Israel to repentance through great affliction. Sometimes God has to knock us down in order to get us to look up at Him – and that's what's happening to Israel during the Tribulation. Through this experience of unimaginable distress, Israel will finally be brought to faith (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25). We find out from

scripture that Israel turning toward her true Messiah – Jesus Christ – acknowledging Him as such, and petitioning His return is actually a precondition for the next event – the Second Coming of Christ, which will end the Tribulation, or the seventieth week (Hosea 5:15; Matthew 23:39).

When Christ does return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, Israel will be ready to receive Him as their Messiah. This now-righteous remnant of Israel will be rescued from the nations that have gathered to destroy her, and Christ will set up His Millennial or Messianic Kingdom on earth (Zechariah 12:2-3; Chapter 14). The Church will have returned with Christ at the Second Coming (Revelation 19:14) and will then rule and reign with Him as His bride for a literal thousand years along with the other First Resurrection believers (Revelation 1:5-6; 20:6; et al.).

Strong support for a literal future Millennium is found in the clear teaching of Revelation 20:1-7, where it says six times that Christ's Kingdom will last one thousand years. Scripture tells us that during this thousand-year period, the Lord will establish His physical kingdom on this earth with Jerusalem as its capital. With Christ reigning as King, Israel will be the prominent nation on earth, after being restored spiritually and physically. Representatives from all nations will come to Jerusalem to honor and worship the King – Jesus Christ – who will reign on the throne of David, fulfilling a multitude of Old Testament Kingdom prophecies (Isaiah 60; Zechariah 8; Micah 4:2). Then, following the Millennium, will come the Eternal State, as God's full plan for the redemption of mankind will have been realized (Revelation 21-22).

It is essential to understand that the Church has not replaced Israel in God's plan. While God's time-clock has shifted to focus on the Church for the past two thousand years (the Church Age), He has not forgotten Israel, and will one day restore them to His intended role as the nation He has chosen (Romans 11).

This was just a brief outline of the Bible's eschatological timetable. If what we just discussed was new to you, or difficult for you to follow, or you simply don't understand how we came to those conclusions,

we will be exploring much of it in detail later on in this study. We just felt it important to introduce this basic overview of how these concepts of literal interpretation, as well as the distinction between Israel and the Church yield a proper understanding of eschatology and the future plans of God for mankind.

Now that we have defined some of our important foundational terms and concepts, let's begin our study by investigating one of the most basic foundations for understanding the distinction between Israel and the Church – the Biblical concept of "covenant."

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2. "What is a Gentile?" *GotQuestions.org*. (https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-a-Gentile.html - Retrieved 2/01/19)
3. "What is replacement theology/supersessionism?" *GotQuestions.org*. (https://www.gotquestions.org/replacement-theology.html - Retrieved 2/01/19)
4. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. and exp. ed., Chicago: Moody, 2007, pp. 46-48.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLE - A BOOK OF COVENANTS

You cannot understand the Bible without understanding the concept of covenant. In the larger picture, all of the Bible is covenant. The two Testaments (Old and New) are stories of God's covenants – or relationships – with mankind at different times and in different ways. In fact, the word "testament" actually means covenant (Greek – *diatheke*, Strong's #G1242).[1]

A covenant is an agreement or legal contract between two individuals or parties. There are generally terms and conditions on both sides, and if one breaks the contract, the other side is freed from their obligations.[2]

It is instructive to recognize that in the Apostle Paul's letters, he always presents a trichotomy; he divides people into three categories – the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church (we will look into this in more detail later). However, prior to the birth of the Church on Pentecost, scripture divides people into only two groups – Jews and Gentiles. Those were the only two categories that existed prior to the Church, and they are the only two categories that will exist after the Rapture, during the Tribulation.

The Old and New Testaments both make very clear what caused

this distinction between Israel and the nations. It was the covenants God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then with their descendants through Moses.

The Old Testament contains a number of covenants, but what's interesting is how many of them are **unconditional.** In other words, in many of these cases, God promised He would perform His covenant promises **without requiring any specific terms or actions from the other party.**

The important distinction between Jews and Gentiles is maintained consistently throughout the Bible, as God separated Israel from the other nations by way of these covenants. The following are several passages that clearly describe Israel's separation as God's chosen.

> For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? **so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.**
>
> -Exodus 33:16

> And **ye shall be holy unto me:** for I the Lord am holy, and **have severed you from other people,** that ye should be mine.
>
> -Leviticus 20:26

> And what **one nation** in the earth is like **thy people Israel,** whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?
>
> For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, Lord, becamest their God.
>
> -1 Chronicles 17:21-22

> That at that time ye [Gentiles] were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
>
> -Ephesians 2:12

So, we can clearly see from just this small sampling of passages, that throughout scripture, Israel is always viewed as being a separate group from the Gentiles. This not to say that Gentiles couldn't know God in any way, but rather that it was specifically Israel who was made the "covenant nation" that God would work through in order to communicate His truth to mankind. Let's familiarize ourselves with some of the covenants God made with Israel.

The Covenants Made Exclusively With Israel

We will now begin to examine the covenants God made exclusively with Israel as a nation. God did not issue any of these covenants to the Church nor any other nation. The following are in historical order, with the exception of one (for a certain reason).

#1 – The Abrahamic Covenant

In Genesis 12, God unilaterally (or unconditionally) offers Abraham several important promises. God says He will:

- Make Abraham a great nation
- Make Abraham's name great
- Bless those who bless him and curse those that curse him
- Bless all the nations through him (this in large part, being a reference to the Messiah who would be one of Abraham's descendants – one who would bring salvation to all mankind).

It is important to note that this was an unconditional covenant in every way. In the ancient world, a covenant would be made official by cutting open a dove or a ram, or some other animal or animals, and placing them on the ground so that both parties involved in the covenant could walk between the pieces. In the case of this covenant God made with Abraham, God took on the form of a "smoking furnace and a flaming torch" and passed between the pieces alone.

God had caused Abraham to fall asleep while this took place, further communicating that the full weight of responsibility in this covenant was to fall on God, and not Abraham (Genesis 15).

So, this covenant was unconditional, or unilateral in every way. It did not in any way depend upon Abraham or his descendants doing anything. And furthermore, this covenant was an everlasting covenant. There is nothing that can or will prevent God from keeping this covenant with Abraham.

#2 – The Land Covenant

In Genesis 15 and 17, God adds another promise to the list that He's already offered Abraham, promising his descendants the land of Canaan, from the River of Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18; 17:7-8). God promised to give the land to Abraham's descendants as an everlasting possession. This was an unconditional covenant promise, and is one that has yet to be fulfilled in its entirety. Israel has never controlled the entirety of the land designated in this land promise.

It's important to note that this promise was not directed at **all** of his descendants, but was directed specifically to the offspring of Isaac, whom the Bible calls the "son of promise" (Genesis 17:15-27). In Genesis 48:4, God then renewed the promise to Isaac's son Jacob. God would unconditionally give that land to Jacob's descendants as an everlasting possession.

#3 – The Davidic Covenant

We later find that in Genesis 49:10, God promised that a king would come from the tribe of Judah (one of the sons of Jacob). From Judah, God chose a shepherd boy named David to be king. God then expounded upon His original promise, telling King David that he would be the progenitor of an everlasting Kingdom – that his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

This was also an unconditional covenant. Yet, there is a catch – if David's children disobeyed God, they would be punished. Yet, God would still have mercy on David's line in the end, and a Son of David would reign on his throne forever. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel arrives to tell Mary (a descendant of David) that God's promise to David would be fulfilled through a baby she would supernaturally conceive.

> And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
>
> And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.
>
> He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
>
> And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
>
> -Luke 1:30-33

So, we can see clearly how the words of the angel provide the fulfillment for the promises given to David regarding His Messianic descendant – an everlasting Kingdom and the Throne of David.

This factors into our discussion of the future Millennial reign of Christ. We must ask ourselves, "when did Jesus – during His First Coming – ever reign from the throne of David?" Not only do we know that it didn't happen at His First Coming, but the throne of David didn't even exist in that day, as Rome ruled Israel in the first century AD. Yet, Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would rule on the throne of David and His Kingdom would last forever.

We know from understanding Biblical eschatology that when Christ returns at the end of Daniel's seventieth week, He will then establish the Kingdom Age – the Millennium – when He will literally rule on David's throne from Jerusalem as an earthly monarch for a thousand years. It is during this time that He will ultimately fulfill numerous Kingdom-related Old Testament prophecies and promises given to Israel.

So, you should be able to see how when the Bible is taken plainly at its literal or normal meaning, our perceptions of eschatology begin to become clear. If you are to take these words of God to Abraham and David seriously, then you cannot spiritualize or allegorize away these clear promises. These promises must come to pass, and the Biblical prophets give us the clear understanding that they will come to pass in a future Messianic Kingdom on earth. Both the Old and New Testaments make this abundantly clear.

#4 – The Mosaic Covenant

Although historically, the Mosaic Covenant was given before the Davidic Covenant, there is one major difference between this one and the previous ones we discussed – the Mosaic Covenant was **conditional.** This was a **bilateral** covenant, meaning **both** parties had **conditions to uphold.** For that reason, we left it to be discussed until after the unconditional covenants.

The Book of Exodus contains the story of the Israelites' incredible departure from slavery in Egypt. Now being a large group of people out in the desert facing the task of self-governance as a new nation, God called Israel into a covenant relationship. At Mt. Sinai, God called their leader, Moses, up into the mountain where he would receive this covenant, which would be characterized by the Ten Commandments.

The Covenant would ultimately include 613 commands or laws, instructing the people on every aspect of their lives. It served the ultimate purpose of dispensing to them the unique task of preserving the oracles of God and being a light of godliness unto the nations. Most ultimately, this was to lead Israel (and by extension, all nations) as a schoolmaster to the recognition of Christ as being the Messianic fulfillment of this Law (Galatians 3:24).

At Sinai, both parties (God and Israel) agreed to the obligations of this **bilateral** and **conditional** covenant.

> Now therefore, **if** ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, **then** ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:
>
> And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.
>
> -Exodus 19:5-6

After hearing all of the conditions of the Covenant, Israel, responds in agreement by saying…

> All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.
>
> -Exodus 19:8

So, this was a conditional covenant agreed to by both parties. The signatories of the covenant were Israel and God, and for any generation to experience the blessings God promised under this covenant, there had to be a level of faithfulness demonstrated by Israel to God. As mentioned, this covenant or Law contained 613 commands. **These commands were given specifically and only to the nation Israel** to govern and guide their moral, religious, and secular life at this time while in the Promised Land. The Mosaic Law – much less its punishments – are obviously not generalizable to Gentiles or other nations, although any nation could benefit by embracing the transcendent moral elements it contained.

Keep in mind that these moral elements were not new to humanity in the Mosaic Law. Rather, God's Eternal Law always has and always will confer moral requirements upon humanity – and morality is unchanging. In other words, murder did not first become wrong when the Ten Commandments were issued. Murder always was and always will be morally wrong, completely independent of this Covenant. The morality codified in the Mosaic Law is simply a reflection of God's already existent unchanging nature and Eternal Law evident to all men through, at minimum, the conscience (Romans 2:14-15).

So, again, the Mosaic Law was conditional. It was through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (the Law) that Israel would be able to experience blessings in the Promised Land. For obedience, there

would be blessings; for disobedience, there would be cursings, as we see in the following passage.

> And it shall come to pass, **if** thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
>
> **And all these blessings shall come on thee,** and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.
>
> …
>
> But it shall come to pass, **if** thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; **that all these curses shall come upon thee,** and overtake thee…
>
> -Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15

Reading through the entire chapter of Deuteronomy 28 will make clear the blessings and cursings relative to Israel's compliance with the conditions of the Mosaic Law. So, we see very clearly that the Mosaic Law required each signatory to uphold certain commitments.

So then, does scripture say this Covenant is still operative today? And if not, when did it terminate?

One of the profound emphases of the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul, is that **Christians are not under the rule of the Mosaic Law** – as this covenant was never made with the Church or any Gentiles – and furthermore, was completely fulfilled in Christ. This truth is stated in no uncertain terms, and in various ways throughout the New Testament, which we will go over.

But many who believe Christians are still subject to the Mosaic Law habitually quote Jesus'ss statement in Matthew 5:17-18 to support their contention that the Church is under the Law. This statement reads as follows.

> Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, **one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law**…
-Matthew 5:17-18a

"One jot or tittle" is essentially a Hebrew equivalent of saying "not the dotting of an 'I' or the crossing of a 'T' will pass from the law." In other words, not even the tiniest, most insignificant pen-stroke in the letters of the Law would be discarded. Yet, those who interpret this to mean that the Law is still in effect routinely seem to leave out the rest of the sentence, which continues in Verse 18:

…**till** all be fulfilled.
-Matthew 5:18b

The word "till" – or, "until" is important to grasp here. In fact, you should learn to notice the "untils" found in scripture. They often are essential markers or bookends that help us distinguish certain concepts in the Bible – and that certainly is the case here. Far from teaching that the Law would always be in force, Christ declared that it would only be in operation "till" – or "until" – it was fulfilled, **and that He had come to fulfill it:** "…I am not come to destroy, but **to fulfil**…" Jesus says something similar in Luke 16.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.
And **it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.**
-Luke 16:16-17

The Law and the Prophets is obviously a clear reference to the Old Covenant, as revealed to Israel in the Hebrew scriptures (or the Christian Old Testament). Jesus said this Old Covenant ended with John the Baptist. We will later examine a complimentary passage where Jesus describes John the Baptist as the greatest of the Old Covenant prophets (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28).

So, Jesus is clear that the times under the Mosaic Law ended with John, and that He (Jesus) had come to introduce something new. However, in the very next verse, Jesus makes clear that not one tittle of the Law would fail – a statement almost identical to the earlier passage we read that has confused so many people who believe the Law is still active and that Christians are subject to it. So, Jesus is clear that the Law is over in Luke 16:16, and yet many get the opposite idea by the following verse (Verse 17). What does He mean?

These verses clearly indicate that the Mosaic Law was about to conclude the purpose which God had intended it to serve (to lead Israel to the recognition of Christ – Galatians 3:24-25) and it would soon no longer be in effect. After the events of Calvary, the message of the Law and the Prophets (the Old or Mosaic Covenant) would be replaced by a greater revelation, that of the New Covenant (to be discussed next). But then Jesus immediately (in Verse 17) stresses that the Old Testament would always remain inspired, and moreover, *fulfilled* scripture, instead of being something which afterward should be tossed aside as rubbish.

The Law served several purposes: to more profoundly reveal sin, and to reveal mankind's inability (on his own merit) to do anything about it. It served to point us to Christ, who fulfills the Law. The Messiah's death on the cross completely satisfied God's justice through His sinless perfection, accomplishing and fulfilling the redemption and atonement that the Old Covenant pointed towards. We see this in John 19, as the dying Christ took His last breath on the cross.

> After this, Jesus knowing that **all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled,** saith, I thirst.
>
> Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.
>
> When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**
>
> -John 19:28-30

Christ completely fulfilled the prophecies, types, and shadows contained within the Mosaic Law that pointed forward to His work as the Messiah and Savior of the world. Therefore, we understand why the Law must have continued **until** He had accomplished everything, as this verse alluded to. This happened at the death of Jesus, and harmonizes perfectly with the later teachings of Paul in Romans and Galatians. For instance, in Galatians, Paul says…

> Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, **till** the **seed should come to whom the promise was made;** and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.
> -Galatians 3:19

So, again we see this word "till," or "until." Paul says the Law served a temporary purpose that would continue only **until** the "seed," or the promised Messiah would come.

The following chart details just a few of the ways Christ fulfilled different aspects of the Mosaic Law:

Element of the Mosaic Law	Fulfillment in Christ
Burnt offerings	Continual forgiveness (1 Jn. 2:1, 2)
Blood of the sacrifices	Blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19)
Most Holy Place	Presence of God (Heb. 10:19-23)
Tabernacle	Incarnation (Jn. 1:1-3, 14)
Shekinah glory	Glory of God's Son (Jn. 1:14)
Uplifted serpent	The cross of Christ (Jn. 3:14)
High Priest	Redemption of Christ (Heb. 9:11, 12)
Circumcision	Removal of the "flesh" (Col. 2:11)
Sabbath	The rest of God (Heb. 4:8-11)
Jubilee	Liberation from the bondage of sin (Lk. 4:18, 19)
Passover	The Lamb of God (Jn. 1:36)

Jesus Himself explained that the Old Testament Law was all about Him.

> And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.
>
> Search the **scriptures** [which at that time was only the Old Testament]; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and **they are they which testify of me.**
>
> -John 5:38-39

Several verses later, he then said:

> For had ye believed **Moses** [the writings of Moses, or the Law], ye would have believed me; **for he wrote of me.**
>
> -John 5:46

On the day of Christ's resurrection, Jesus joined two disciples as they traveled on the road to Emmaus. Luke, who records this, summarizes the seven-mile Bible study that Jesus gave to these disciples, by saying:

> And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in **all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**
>
> -Luke 24:27

The New Testament is clear that the Mosaic Law was brought to its intended completion in Christ, as we can see in the following sampling of additional passages.

> For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth.
>
> -Romans 10:4

In other words, the Mosaic Law reached fulfillment, or reached its intended end in Christ.

> For sin shall not have dominion over you: for **ye are not under the law,** but under grace.

-Romans 6:14

Very plainly, Paul says Christians are not under the Mosaic Law.

> Wherefore, my brethren, **ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ**…
> -Romans 7:4a

Paul tells us we are dead to the Law by the body of Christ, or the Church. In other words, when Christ introduced the Church, the Mosaic Law was superseded by the New Covenant.

> Tell me, **ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?**
> -Galatians 4:21

The only way these Christians to whom Paul was writing could "desire to be under the law" would be if they were not already under it. You can't desire to be under something that you're already under. So, grammatically and logically, Paul's wording confirms to us again that we are not under the Law.

Paul also describes the actual *purpose* of the Law as being a temporary institution designed to lead to a more ultimate fulfillment:

> Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,** that we might be justified by faith.
> But **after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.**
> -Galatians 3:24-25

So the Law was a temporary institution designed to lead to a more ultimate institution, at which time we will no longer be under it. In other words, once the fulfillment arrives, the types and shadows that anticipated or pointed toward the fulfillment become obsolete. This is even more clearly said in the next passage.

> In that he saith, **A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.**
> -Hebrews 8:13

The writer of this passage in Hebrews plainly tells us that the Old Covenant is outdated, decaying, and is fading away. The *English Standard Version* phrases this passage as follows, actually using the word "obsolete."

> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one **obsolete.** And what is becoming **obsolete** and growing old is ready to vanish away.
> -Hebrews 8:13 (ESV)

So then, if the Mosaic Covenant (or Old Covenant) – which was specifically given to Israel – has been fulfilled by Christ and is now obsolete and has vanished away, then what covenant is relevant today, and to whom was it given? As alluded to earlier, the answer is the New Covenant, which we will explore next.

Before moving on to discuss the New Covenant, you should understand the purpose for our investigation of the covenants made with Israel. All of those covenants we discussed highlighted Israel's distinction among the nations. Because of those covenants, Israel was always a group distinct from the Gentile nations. We have seen that God has always dealt with them as a group distinct from the Gentiles.

Note: To learn even more about the purpose and background for God's calling of Israel, feel free to refer to the companion study entitled, "Should Christians Support Israel?"

As we move into exploring the New Covenant, we will find that although it was also originally a promise given to Israel, its near-term fulfillment established a new, third group (other than Jew and Gentile), called **the Church,** that came into existence on the Day of Pentecost in 33 AD.

An Introduction to the New Covenant

Although the New Covenant was also a covenant originally made with Israel, we have separated it from the previous covenants as its own subsection because it's the only covenant extended to all humanity. In other words, all of the other covenants made with Israel were made exclusively with Israel (or their progenitors). The Gentile nations may in many ways be blessed by those covenants, and every blessing the Church has in some way derives from those covenants – but the New Covenant is unique in that although it was originally promised to Israel, it was always intended to be extended to all nations.

It was always God's ultimate plan to use Israel as an instrument to deliver His truth to all of humanity – to be a blessing of light unto the nations. The ultimate Light would be the Messiah, who would bring salvation to the entire world through a New Covenant. When Israel rejected her Messiah and His offer of the Messianic Kingdom, God placed Israel on pause and introduced His interim program called the Church, through which He would make this New Covenant available for all nations. This New Covenant would be the ultimate and everlasting basis of relationship that would bridge the gap between God and man, reinstituting the intimate relationship that was lost in the Garden of Eden when original sin took place.

The Old Covenant was established to point towards this New Covenant, physically symbolizing the greater spiritual and heavenly fulfillments that the New Covenant would confer. The Church was the first to receive this New Covenant on the Day of Pentecost, and would become a third distinct group, apart from the previous two (Jews and Gentiles). This new group could only be established following the death and resurrection of Christ – the work He completed on Calvary in 33 AD. So, we can say that the New Covenant and the Church Age share the same beginning point.

Throughout this subsection in particular, we will be "walking Word," (meaning going through a lot of scriptures), so it may be a good idea to have your Bible on hand to pause at your own pace and explore each passage on your own in order to fully understand each. If

this is new to you, we encourage you to take it at your own pace. Let's begin.

The concept of a New Covenant was not a new idea concocted in the New Testament, or some novel concept introduced by Christians. Many of the Old Testament prophets – such as Isaiah, Joel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah – prophesied of the time when God would make a New Covenant with His people – a new basis of relationship. The following are several examples.

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
>
> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:
>
> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;** and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
>
> -Jeremiah 31:31-33

> Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
>
> **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:** and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
>
> -Ezekiel 36:25-26

> And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;** and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
>
> -Joel 2:28

Let's recognize that all of these Old Testament prophecies regarding the New Covenant were, in original context, made to Israel

– an important but often overlooked point that we will revisit throughout this study. The Jeremiah 31 passage actually says that this New Covenant would be made with the "house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." **We need to recognize that the Church was a mystery entity hidden throughout the Old Testament.**

Some have illustrated this concept as a series of mountain peaks, separated by a valley that lay in between. The first mountain peak represents the events of the First Coming of the Messiah, and the next taller mountain peaks represent the events of the Second Coming and then the Millennial Kingdom that immediately follows. In between the first two peaks sits a valley encompassing the Church Age, which was below the line of vision for the prophets. They could see the mountain peaks in the distance, and from their view, they seemed to follow each other sequentially without gaps or interruptions. But from their vantage point, they couldn't tell that between the mountains was a valley. In other words, they couldn't know that there was a two thousand-or-more-year Church Age that separated the events they saw. All of these things were beneath their line of sight.

This truth is taught consistently in the scriptures, as we see from the words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 13. Jesus's disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables. His response alluded to this coming "valley," or period of time we now call the Church, as being a time which the Old Testament prophets could not see.

> And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
>
> He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
>
> For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.
>
> Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
>
> And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By

hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

For verily I say unto you, That **many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.**

-Matthew 13:10-17

In other words, due to God's foreknowledge of Israel's national unbelief, there was a mystery age inserted in between the two mountain peaks that the prophets were not permitted to foresee. Knowing that the nation of Israel would reject His Messiah, God had planned a hidden age that was not disclosed until later on in Jesus's earthly ministry. When it became clear that the nation would reject Him as their King, it was only then that Jesus began to reveal this truth of a mystery age that would occur prior to the introduction of His Kingdom. This is taught also in 1 Peter.

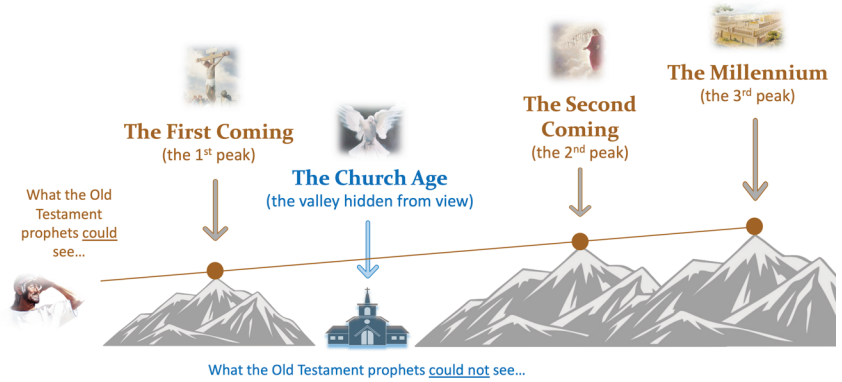
Of which salvation **the prophets have enquired and searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

-1 Peter 1:10

Peter states that the prophets did not have the full disclosure of what would occur during the Church Age. In fact, they did not have any knowledge of this hidden period. They were given prophecies of the First Coming, which portrayed the Messiah as the "Suffering Servant." They were given prophecies of the Second Coming, which portrayed the Messiah as the "Conquering King" who would introduce the Kingdom reign. While the prophets were shown these distinct "mountain peaks" of prophecy, they were unable to see the "valley" of

the Church Age that lay between them. Therefore, they could not fully understand how the hazy and seemingly-contradictory prophesies of the Old Testament would come to pass.

The Mountain Peaks of Prophecy



The point being, the Old Testament prophets who spoke of this coming New Covenant had no idea about it being poured out upon an entity comprised of both Jews and Gentiles called the Church, as we see fulfilled in the New Testament Book of Acts. The context they expected and foresaw was its outpouring upon national Israel, and they saw it within the context of their national restoration (spiritually and physically) in the Millennial or Messianic Kingdom.

But when Israel as a nation rejected her Messiah at His First Coming, the Kingdom Age was postponed, and God introduced His mystery plan for a new entity called the Church! Although the Church began with the Jewish followers of Jesus as they received this New Covenant Spirit outpouring on Pentecost, this outpouring was soon extended to the Gentiles (Acts 10 and following), as this mystery hidden Church Age was inaugurated. In fact, Paul, who more than any other was given the privilege of revealing this mystery doctrine of the Church, actually referred to it as a "mystery" (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:4-5; 5:31-32; Colossians 1:25-27). That word in Greek is *mystērion* (Strong's #G3466), and has a slightly different meaning than

our same word does in English. In the Greek New Testament, *mystērion* is a term normally used to refer to "that which has been kept secret by God in the past, but which He has now chosen to reveal."[3]

But here is a key point. Unfortunately, many Christians see these Old Testament prophecies that we just read, which speak of the New Covenant, as being completely fulfilled in the context of the Church (as presented in Acts and following). They completely miss the fact that the original Millennial context of these Old Testament prophecies reveals to us that these promises of the New Covenant outpouring on Israel will find ultimate fulfillment in the Millennium, as all of Israel will be saved. Although we won't engage deeply on this right now, you should recognize that when carefully examining these Old Testament prophecies, it is impossible to claim total fulfillment in the events of the Spirit outpouring on the Church on Pentecost in Acts 2 and following. According to these prophecies, one of the criteria points is that *all of Israel* will be saved when this takes place (Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 59:20-21; Romans 11:24-29), and the context of *when* this takes place is unmistakably *Millennial*. A reading of the chapters surrounding these New Covenant prophecies clearly conveys this context. Obviously, a national salvation of this scale has never yet taken place for Israel, but will in the future Millennial Kingdom Age.

But in the New Testament, we find that the New Testament authors quoted all of these prophecies and clearly applied at least partial fulfillment to the Church after the Spirit outpouring on Pentecost. The Church has become the first beneficiary of this New Covenant, as it was always God's plan to extend it to the Gentiles, which we will see shortly. So, it is important to understand that the past partial fulfillment does not negate the certainty of the future ultimate fulfillment in the Millennium for national Israel, as originally prophesied.

But let's discuss another important point to be aware of regarding this subject of the Church and the New Covenant. As we continue our exploration of the New Covenant, we need to be sensitive to the fact that the New Covenant is not a synonym for the Church. The New Covenant will extend past the Church Age, as it's an everlasting

covenant. The Church is a subset *within* the broader group we can call "New Covenant believers." The Church was the first recipient of the New Covenant and is the only current recipient at this time. If you are not sure exactly what we mean by this, be assured that all will be explained as we continue. So, for the purposes of this study, we will often closely associate the Church and the New Covenant, but just be aware that they are not perfectly synonymous in the greater scope. With that said, let's continue.

The New Covenant was to be the completion of which the Old Covenant made at Sinai would culminate. Put another way, the Old Covenant was meant to lead Israel to the New Covenant, which would then be extended to all nations. Along the way, Israel was meant to be a light of God to the nations, preparing the Gentiles to also receive it.

Galatians tells us that the New Covenant is the fulfillment of what the Old Covenant Law acted as a "schoolmaster" pointing towards (Galatians 3:24-25). As we continue, we will see that the basis of the New Covenant, as it exists today in the Church Age, involves the Spirit endowment in the heart of the believer.

The following passage from Romans tells us that what was impossible to accomplish through the Law (because it depended upon our own humanity, or flesh to live up to), will be fulfilled and accomplished through the Holy Spirit living inside of us, enabling us to walk after the Spirit.

> For **what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,** God sending his **own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,** and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
>
> That the **righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**
>
> -Romans 8:3-4

So, Paul actually contrasts the Law (or the Old Covenant) with the Spirit (or the New Covenant). He tells us that what the nation of Israel was not able to do through the Old Covenant, would now become possible for believers who take part in the New Covenant

established through the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross. This New Covenant was announced by Jesus at the Last Supper prior to His crucifixion.

> Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the **new testament** [or covenant] **in my blood, which is shed for you.**
>
> -Luke 22:20

So, Jesus introduced the New Covenant at the Last Supper, although as we will see further ahead, it would not actually be inaugurated until the Spirit outpouring on Pentecost, fifty days after His crucifixion.

The author of Hebrews goes to great lengths to expound upon the details of the New Covenant, contrasting it with the Old. He makes clear that this is a better covenant founded upon better promises, replacing an old, faulty, temporary, and inferior covenant. He includes a quote of the passage we read earlier in Jeremiah 31 that spoke of God's Law being written on the hearts of His people, instead of on tablets of stone (as in the Old Covenant).

> But now hath he [Jesus] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the **mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.**
>
> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
>
> For finding fault with them, he saith [now quoting Jeremiah 31], Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **New Covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
>
> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
>
> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind,**

and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

-Hebrews 8:6-12

How does Jesus Christ work with His people in writing God's Law on our hearts? We know that Christ accomplishes this through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit indwelling, or living in the believer. So, we will see that the indwelling Holy Spirit is the foundational distinction between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

-Galatians 2:20

The importance of God's Spirit alive inside of us cannot be overstated. It gives us the ability to keep God's Law through Christ working in our lives, and is the basis of this New Covenant.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, stating how the Old Covenant letter of the Law was unable to bring life. However, through the New Covenant, the **Spirit** will give life. In this passage, he quotes the prophecy we read earlier in Ezekiel 36.

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; **not in tables of stone,** but in **fleshy tables of the heart.**

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament** [covenant]**; not of the letter, but of the spirit:** for the **letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.**

-2 Corinthians 3:3-6

The letter of God's Law was written on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai as the Old Covenant was given to Israel. Sadly, that Law, which reflected the very character of God, remained on the tablets of stone and largely did not become a part of the lives of God's people Israel. But through God's Spirit, the overall intention of the Law of God is accomplished, as it's written upon the hearts of current New Covenant believers (Christians) enabling them to live according to the Spirit.

So, it is also clear that the New Covenant, made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, would be empowered through the **Spirit,** also reflecting the other key prophetic New Covenant passage we examined in Joel 2 – "And it shall come to pass **afterward** that I will **pour out my Spirit on all flesh.**" So, it is obvious that the major difference is that the New Covenant would involve the Spirit in a way completely different from the Old. And it was only made possible through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

There should be no confusion as to the identification of the New Covenant. It was clearly anticipated by the Old Testament prophets, and the New Testament writers clearly apply those prophecies to the Christian experience – the Church. As we go on, we will continue to see more examples of the New Testament writers applying these Old Testament prophecies of the New Covenant to the Church.

The New Covenant and the Church

In this subsection, we will begin to further connect what we have already examined with the concept of the distinction between Israel and the Church.

Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, He offered the promised Kingdom Age, or Messianic Kingdom to the nation of Israel. This was the promise of God discussed in tremendous detail throughout the prophetic writings of the Old Testament prophets. And this promise of the earthly Messianic Kingdom was the ultimate anticipation of every Jew. In their understanding, the arrival of the Messiah brings the arrival of the kingdom.

The gospel of Matthew very carefully traces this subject of Christ's

offer of the kingdom to Israel. Matthew Chapters 1 through 10 detail John the Baptist and Christ's preaching regarding this offer of the kingdom – "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then, beginning in Chapter 11 – and primarily in Chapter 12, he explains that the leadership of the nation rejected that offer. When they rejected this offer, the offer was withdrawn and God's program for Israel was postponed.

The day will come when a future generation will accept the offer and turn to their true Messiah – and the kingdom *will* come. But that day was not in the first century AD. Skipping ahead for a moment in Matthew, we see this future generation prophetically detailed in Matthew 24 and 25, in which Jesus explains how this promise will one day be accepted and how God will fulfill every promise He ever made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel. Chapter 24 tells us that a future generation of national Israel will turn to Christ at the end of the Tribulation, prior to Christ's Second Coming. But for now, let's focus back on the first century and Israel's rejection of her Messiah.

Because of Israel's rejection of her Messiah (and by extension, His kingdom), God, who never leaves the earth without a witness of Himself, would then introduce a new body of believers called the Church that would fill the intervening gap of time until Israel's future spiritual restoration. So, God introduced this new interim program (the Church) – a program that (as we discussed earlier) was unknown to Old Testament prophecy, yet was foreknown to Him. In fact, the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3 tells us that the Church was not "Plan B" – but was part of the foreknown, eternal purpose of God, which we will discuss more further ahead in this section.

It's important to understand that Israel's rejection did not "catch God off-guard." He knew exactly how they would react, and His plan was always to use their rejection in order to separate out for Himself the Church, which the Bible calls the pure, virgin bride of Christ. Israel as a nation was the instrument God chose to work through in order to introduce His plan of redemption for mankind. But His purpose was always to not just have one nation, but to have believers of all nations as His bride (the Church). Yet, Israel plays an important role in God's program for humanity's redemption – and His uncondi-

tional promises to her will be fulfilled. But let's continue to understand how this is laid out in Matthew.

In Chapter 12, Matthew records the nation's rejection of Christ's offer of the kingdom – with the main turning point being their attribution of His miracles to Satan. Once their rejection of Jesus's ministry was final with their leadership doing that, the offer was retracted. We then get an explanation of what God is going to be doing while the kingdom is in postponement, awaiting the future generation that will receive the offer. This begins to be explained in what is known as the Kingdom Parables in Matthew 13, in which Jesus gives a number of parables discussing this postponement of the kingdom. In the following chapters, Jesus begins to signal His introduction of this new interim plan called the Church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus introduces this new concept by name.

> And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
>
> -Matthew 16:18

The word church in this passage is from the Greek word *ekklesia* (Strong's #H1577), meaning a called-out assembly or congregation of believers.[4] In this passage, Jesus was responding to Peter's answer to His question in Verse 15. Jesus had initially asked:

> But whom say ye that I am?
>
> -Matthew 16:15b

Peter responded by affirming the revelation that Jesus was the Son of God.

> And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
>
> -Matthew 16:16

In other words, what the nation had rejected, Peter (among others) had accepted. Jesus responded to this by saying:

> And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
>
> -Matthew 16:17

Jesus then speaks what we already read in Verse 18, calling Peter by name, and saying that it is this rock of revelation of who He is, that would be the "bedrock" of the Church. Jesus appears to be using a play on words in the Greek. "You are Peter (*petros*) and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church." Since Peter's name means rock, and Jesus is going to build His Church on a rock – it appears that He was using a play on words to convey that Peter would be instrumental in delivering this "rock" of revelation to the world – which he would do on the Day of Pentecost and following. Jesus Christ is also called the "rock," and the Chief Cornerstone, revealing Himself – as God in flesh – to be the "rock" upon which this Church will be built.[5]

So, the point here is that we can see Jesus anticipating the future formation of this new entity called the Church. This futuristic language ("I *will* build my church") is a key point to make note of, which we will discuss in more depth further ahead. So, God would use this new entity as His interim mechanism to bless the world with His offer of New Covenant salvation. The promises of New Covenant salvation originally given to Israel, will become available to all nations through the Church during this interim period. As a result, there would now be three divisions of mankind: Jews, Gentiles and the Church.

We see this trichotomy clearly reflected later in the New Testament writings. Paul, in his epistles, always separated people into a trichotomy – Jews (or Israel), Gentiles (or non-Jews), and the Church (made up of both, yet now as a distinct third group). For instance, in 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that we are to:

> Give none offence, neither to the **Jews,** nor to the **Gentiles,** nor to the **church of God:**
>
> -1 Corinthians 10:32

So, we clearly see three groups – Jews, Gentiles, and now, the Church. Like we said earlier, all of the benefits we enjoy as members of this third group are ultimately derived from the former covenants made with Israel, which we will see in the following passage. The idea of the Church being "grafted into" the spiritual promises of the household of God is neatly summarized in this following excerpt from Ephesians 2, and demonstrates the relationship of the New Covenant Gentile believer to the former covenants.

> Therefore remember that at one time you **Gentiles** in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands — remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, **alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,** having no hope and without God in the world. But now **in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** For he himself is our peace, **who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances,** that he might create in himself **one new man in place of the two,** so making peace, and might **reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross,** thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.** So then **you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God **by the Spirit.**
>
> -Ephesians 2:11-22 (ESV)

So, Paul explains how we were grafted into the promises of God, which He instituted through Israel. Again, we can see how Israel was the instrument God used to introduce His plan to mankind as a whole. Some have mistakenly interpreted this to mean that the Church becomes part of Israel. But in the writings of the scriptures, and especially of Paul, we continue to see that Israel, as a distinct national entity currently in unbelief, has a future separate destiny from that of the Church in God's plan. It is not Israel that the New Covenant believer becomes part of. Instead, we are grafted into the spiritual aspects of the promises that God had first introduced to Israel (the New Covenant).

But this same theme of "three groups" (Jews, Gentiles, and the Church), is maintained throughout Paul's writing. Although the Church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, it is clear from scripture that once in the Church, one is neither Jew nor Gentile – one instead becomes a part of a different group entirely. For example, we see this in Romans 10 in the obvious context of initiation into the Church.

> **For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:** for the same Lord over all is rich unto **all** that call upon him.
>
> For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
>
> -Romans 10:9-13

So, we see here that Paul categorizes members of the Church as a third group, in which there is no "difference between the Jew and the Greek" (or Gentiles). In the rest of his writings however, we can see that outside of the Church, he still treats the rest of humanity as being part of either the Jews or the Gentiles. We then see in the last verse of that passage – after stating that within the context of the Church, there is no Jew/Gentile distinction – Paul then quotes the prophetic New Covenant passage from Joel 2 – "For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." As you may recall, we examined a prophetic New Covenant passage from Joel 2 a short while ago – "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh…"

The verse Paul quoted from is found only several verses after this passage, clearly anchoring its context as a New Covenant prophecy, and strengthening our understanding that Paul was speaking about the New Covenant (Peter also applies this prophecy to the Church in Acts 2). The passage in Joel that Paul was quoting reads as follows.

> And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever** shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered:
>
> -Joel 2:32

So, Paul applies this prophecy to his point that ethnicity is irrelevant in the context of New Covenant salvation and the Church. Paul was highlighting this by the word "whosoever" from Joel's New Covenant prophecy.

While this idea of wide inclusion was certainly hinted at in passages like this, the revelation of the Gentile nations becoming equal citizens in God's New Covenant was not explicit in the Old Covenant, which is why we will see Paul describing this concept as a mystery that he was given the privilege of fully revealing. We should understand that in the New Testament, a mystery typically refers to a previously unrevealed truth that has now been disclosed. The Church is a concept that was not disclosed to the Old Testament audience. Like we said earlier, the Church Age occupies a hidden prophetic valley that lies in between the prophetic mountain peaks of the First and Second Comings of Christ. The Old Testament prophets were unable to see this valley, which the Bible refers to as a mystery age. This is all confirmed by the writings of Paul in Ephesians.

> For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
>
> If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
>
> How that by revelation **he made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote afore in few words,
>
> Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery of Christ**)

> **Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;**
>
> **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**
>
> -Ephesians 3:1-6

Paul expounds on this mystery Church Age that was hidden to the Old Testament prophets, but was made known to Him through divine revelation. He describes the Church as a newly-disclosed entity called the Church, which would be comprised of both Jews and Gentiles through the Spirit.

But again, it is important to note that the Church is not "Plan B" in the mind of God. In fact, as Paul continues in this passage, He makes it clear that the Church – although unknown and unrevealed to the Old Testament audience – **was the predetermined plan of God.** For added clarity, we will read this in the *English Standard Version*.

> And to bring to light for everyone what is **the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God,** who created all things, so that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known** to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. **This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,**
>
> -Ephesians 3:9-11 (ESV)

So, the Church was a predetermined – yet unrevealed – mystery plan of God. This is also a point of distinction between Israel and the Church. The Church's future was unrevealed, but Israel's future was revealed (very clearly and thoroughly throughout the Old Testament prophetic corpus).

And like we mentioned, the idea that Gentiles of all nations would be included in the future New Covenant was only faintly hinted at in the Old Testament. For instance, we see the following in the prophetic book of Hosea.

> And I will say to **them which were not my people, Thou art my people;** and they shall say, **Thou art my God.**
>
> -Hosea 2:23b

Paul actually quotes this passage from Hosea as he argues this exact point. In fact, this is only one of several Old Testament prophetic passages Paul uses in Romans 9 in order to show that the extending of a covenant to the Gentiles *was* hinted at. For brevity, we will only focus on his quote of this passage from Hosea. Paul's quotation of Hosea's prophecy is found in Romans 9, and reads as follows.

> Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?
>
> As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], **I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.**
>
> And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, **Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.**"
>
> Romans 9:24-26

So, we need to recognize this mystery revelation of a third group of people in God's plan – the Church.

As we also see elsewhere in Romans 9, Paul may at times refer to the Jews as his brethren (since he was ethnically a Jew), but he is clear that he only means ethnically (he clarifies by saying "according to the flesh"). In God's eyes – or in other words, according to God's classification, Paul is a member of the Church, making him neither Jew nor Gentile.

> For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for **my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**
>
> **Who are Israelites;** to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

-Romans 9:3-4

So, it is absolutely essential to understand that these three groups exist side by side in today's age. It is also essential to understand that the Church was established by God, offering a New Covenant (or a new basis of relationship with God) that was prophesied of to Israel in the Old Testament, but was always intended in God's plan to extend to all nations. Since Israel rejected their Messiah, they could not be the instrument for this to take place at that time – and God instead introduced the Church as His interim program.

The Beginning of the New Covenant and the Church

You may ask, "When did the Old Covenant cease and the New Covenant begin?" This question is important in helping us sharply divide Israel from the Church, and the New Covenant Age from the Old Covenant Age. As we will see, the New Covenant and the Church share the same beginning point, but the New Covenant will extend beyond the current Church Age. It will, in a sense, skip over the Tribulation, and then be active during the Millennium. It will then remain eternally in effect. We will explore this in more depth further ahead in our study.

Let's now begin to look into this question of when the Old Covenant ended and the New Covenant (and the Church) began. We will find that Jesus Christ Himself makes this distinction clear for us, providing us with the answer to this question.

As we mentioned earlier, Jesus declared that the Old Covenant for Israel under the Law and the Prophets ended with John the Baptist, who declared the coming of Jesus Christ, preached repentance, and paved the way for Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus made this clear, as He is quoted in the following passage in Luke. Earlier, we read this passage in the KJV. Now, let's see how it's rendered in the *New International Version*.

> **The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God** is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.
>
> -Luke 16:16 (NIV)

So, the NIV conveys the same message as the *King James Version*. Note the key word "until" in this passage, which tells us that a key shift has taken place here: the Old Covenant message was proclaimed *until* John the Baptist. Jesus says that after John, the good news (or gospel) of the Kingdom of God will be preached – an obvious allusion to the coming New Covenant Church Age which Jesus was setting the foundation for (cf. Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17).

Of course, until the New Covenant Spirit outpouring at Pentecost took place, the full gospel message could not be commanded to the world – so we should identify John and even Christ as **transitional figures.** John set the stage for the ministry of Christ, calling the people to repentance in preparation to receive their Messiah and His kingdom (which they rejected). Because they rejected it, the fullness of the physical, earthly kingdom could not come at this time, **but the spiritual, heavenly aspects – or, New Covenant salvation – would come.** Jesus came to activate this gospel through His death, burial, and resurrection, in order to provide this New Covenant salvation plan that would then be able to go forth on Pentecost as the Church was initiated. So, we see from this passage that the Old Covenant ended with John the Baptist, and Jesus indicated that something new would shortly be inaugurated.

In support of this, in the following passage in Matthew, we will see that Jesus actually acknowledged John the Baptist as being the greatest of all the **Old Covenant** prophets. In doing so, Jesus created an interesting distinction between the Old Covenant and the New with the following statement.

> Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women **there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding**

> [meaning "yet"], **he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**
>
> -Matthew 11:11

How can this be, that the least in the kingdom of heaven (or the New Covenant) is greater than John the Baptist, who Jesus declared was greater than Elijah, Enoch, Moses, Abraham, David, and all of the Old Testament prophets? If John is greater than all of them, how is the most insignificant person in the New Covenant greater than he?

The answer is simple, and illustrates the uniqueness of the New Covenant, and its first recipients, Church Age believers. Although the Spirit of the Lord greatly empowered those men to perform great feats, they did not possess the **indwelling endowment (or baptism) of the Holy Spirit** in the way that we now can after it was poured out on the Day of Pentecost! This astonishing fact makes clear the distinction and uniqueness of the Church! The New Testament calls Christians heirs of the Kingdom. Although the earthly Kingdom has not yet come, we are heirs of it – and have received the spiritual or heavenly aspects of it through the New Covenant (John 3:3-5; Luke 17:21; Romans 14:17).

The writer of Hebrews echoes the superiority of the New Covenant promises (the promised Holy Spirit) in comparison to the various Old Testament figures, in the following passage.

> **And these all** [meaning prominent OT figures, like the ones we mentioned], **having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:**
>
> **God having provided some better thing for us,** that they without us should not be made perfect.
>
> -Hebrews 11:39-40

And in Hebrews 8:

> By how much also he [Jesus] is the mediator of a **better** covenant, which was established upon **better** promises.

-Hebrews 8:6b

We will see later that these "better promises," pertain to the promise of the Spirit, or as Jesus later phrases it, "the promise of my Father" (Luke 24:49). Everyone who participates in God's New Covenant today – which we've read is accomplished through His indwelling Spirit – has greater spiritual privileges, blessings, and power than John or any of the other Old Covenant figures had.

John preached that the kingdom of heaven (or the New Covenant) was at hand, and called for the people to repent. However, he did not participate in the fullness of that New Covenant (the outpouring of the Spirit, or the Holy Ghost as the KJV words it). John was murdered prior to this (Matthew 14). Instead, we find that the fullness of grace came only through Christ (His death, burial and resurrection).

> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law [or the *Old* Covenant] was given through Moses; grace and truth [or the *New* Covenant] came through Jesus Christ.
>
> -John 1:16-17

John the Baptist did not experience the Spirit baptism himself, but he preached that Jesus, who would come after him, would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

> And [John the Baptist] preached, saying, **There cometh one mightier than I after me** [speaking of Jesus Christ], the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.
>
> **I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.**
>
> -Mark 1:7-8

So, John spoke of Jesus Christ as the figure who would initiate this New Covenant through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. We should recognize that John the Baptist acted as the forerunner to call the people to repentance in preparation of this New Covenant.

However, Jesus did not initiate the New Testament Church or baptize believers with the Holy Ghost while alive on earth. He instead spoke of the Church in the **future tense.** As we noted earlier, Jesus used clear futuristic language when He began to introduce this new entity called the Church.

> Upon this rock I **will** build my church; and the gates of hell **shall** not prevail against it.
>
> -Matthew 16:18b

We will refer to this passage again further ahead, as it helps us provide clear bookends that help us confirm the question of "when did the Church begin?"

In introducing this New Covenant Church, Jesus, at the Last Supper, gave His disciples a new commandment.

> A **new commandment** I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
>
> -John 13:34-35

A few verses later in John 14:11, Jesus also instructed them to believe in Him. It is well understood by the writers of the New Testament, including John, Paul, and James, that these commandments were the New Covenant commandments, and they referred to them as the "Law of Christ," or the "royal law." This is then confirmed later in 1 John 3:22-24, where these commands are reiterated – to believe on the name of Jesus and to love one another – and in fact, are referred to as one single commandment.

> And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, **because we keep his commandments,** and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.
>
> **And this is his commandment,** That we should **believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.**

And **he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him,** and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, **by the Spirit** which he hath given us.

-1 John 3:22-24

But let's look back to Jesus as He prepared His followers for the institution of this New Covenant. Shortly before His ascension, He told His disciples the following.

Then **opened he their understanding,** that they might understand the scriptures,

And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

-Luke 24:45-47

He then told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the New Covenant promise – the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which John also had spoken of. Jesus also said:

And, behold, I send the **promise** of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of **Jerusalem,** until ye be endued with **power from on high.**

-Luke 24:49

We see this also in Acts.

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should **not depart from Jerusalem,** but wait for the **promise** of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him,

saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

-Acts 1:4-8

This passage describes Jesus's instruction to His disciples to return to Jerusalem and await the promised Holy Spirit baptism. He also refers to the ministry of John the Baptist, connecting the passages we previously read in which John prophetically points ahead to this Spirit baptism.

Interestingly, we also see the contrast between the earthly and spiritual components of the Kingdom of God/heaven in this passage. Being typical Jews raised under the anticipation of the coming earthly Messianic Kingdom, the disciples mistakenly thought Jesus, at His First Coming, was here to usher in the Millennial Reign.

They had asked "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They were completely unaware that Jesus had come to establish something completely new – the Church. They had apparently only attributed the New Covenant to being fulfilled during the Millennial/Messianic Reign – and from the Old Testament prophecies, that's what any reader would think. Like we said, the Church was hidden from view.

But notice Jesus's reply – "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

So, Jesus didn't deny that the earthly fulfillment of the kingdom through Israel would one day come, but He instead redirected their attention toward what was relevant at the moment – His interim

program: the *spiritual* component of the kingdom, the New Covenant Spirit outpouring, through which they would become witnesses of the gospel to all nations. In other words, Jesus emphasized the inauguration of the mystery New Covenant entity He had previously referred to as the Church in Matthew 16:18!

Again, this New Covenant has at its foundation, the promise of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-33; 2 Corinthians 3:3-6). We will see that the New Testament Church dates from the Day of Pentecost rather than from John's preaching or the Lord's earthly ministry. God had designed a New Covenant with man, and this covenant required Christ's death, burial and resurrection before it would come into effect. Let's explore this.

Before the New Covenant, Jesus had to die, as we see clearly stated in the following passage in Hebrews.

> And for this cause he [Christ] is the **mediator of the new testament** [covenant], that **by means of death,** for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
>
> **For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.**
>
> -Hebrews 9:15-16

In other words, when a man writes a will, the ones labeled as the beneficiaries of the will do not receive anything until after the man dies. Therefore, Jesus had to die in order that we might receive His promise. Jesus became the mediator of the New Covenant by His death, and His resurrection made His death effective for us.

> But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. **He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**
>
> -Romans 4:24-25 (NIV)

Therefore, the promised Holy Spirit could only be given *after* Christ's death and resurrection. The following passage is an extremely strategic verse in recognizing the distinction between Israel and the Church by way of the Old and New Covenants.

> (But this spake he [Jesus] of the **Spirit,** which they that believe on him should receive: **for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.**)
>
> -John 7:39

This passage is clear that the Spirit outpouring on the believers – the key distinction between the Old and New Covenants – could only happen *after* the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. People who don't recognize this distinction have often questioned: "the thief on the cross didn't receive the Spirit, yet Jesus declared he would be in Paradise. How can this be?" This verse is the answer. The thief on the cross was not part of the Church. He was one of the final believers saved under the Old Covenant. There was no outpouring of the Spirit yet, and this understanding helps us sharply divide things. Jesus confirms this in His speech to His disciples regarding the coming Comforter, or the Holy Ghost.

> Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for **if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;** but if I depart, I will send him unto you.
>
> -John 16:7

John 14 makes it clear that the Comforter is simply Jesus in Spirit form instead of in bodily form.

> And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter,** that he may abide with you for ever;
>
> **Even the Spirit of truth;** whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but **ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**

> I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**
>
> Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.
>
> At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and **I in you.**
>
> -John 14:16-18

The fact that the Spirit was simply Jesus in another form was made clear in this passage by the phrases "ye know him," "I will come to you," and "I in you." This is made clear to us throughout the New Testament. For instance, Paul tells us in Galatians 4:6.

> And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,** crying, Abba, Father.
>
> -Galatians 4:6

So then, when was this Comforter – or the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Jesus – given? The Book of Acts records that the New Testament Church began on the Hebrew feast day called Pentecost, which was about fifty days after Christ's death on the Passover.

As we mentioned earlier, Jesus had instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise – the baptism of the Holy Ghost – the basis of this New Covenant. In obedience to Christ's command, approximately one hundred twenty of His followers returned to Jerusalem after His ascension to await the baptism of the Spirit. Included in this number were the twelve Apostles (with Matthias replacing Judas Iscariot), Mary the mother of Jesus, the brothers of Jesus, and a number of women (Acts 1).

Acts records that they were gathered together in an "upper room," on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. Acts 2 then states that while these one hundred twenty believers were together in this upper room awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the following then took place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

-Acts 2:2-4

When the Holy Ghost entered into all of the one hundred twenty believers, they all began to praise God in languages (tongues) that were unknown to the speakers. The noise of this event caused Jews, who had traveled to Jerusalem from numerous foreign countries and were staying in the city during the feast days, to become astounded at what they were seeing and hearing! Many of the tongues being spoken by the one hundred twenty turned out to be foreign languages that were recognized by these foreign Jewish onlookers as being their own native tongues! They marveled at this and were astonished, and inquired what this was all about!

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

But **this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;**

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, **I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:** and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

And on my servants and on my handmaidens **I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;** and they shall prophesy:

> And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
>
> -Acts 2:12-18, 21

In response to the astonishment of the Jews, Peter stood up and declared this to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of the New Covenant Spirit outpouring from Joel 2:28-32 ("And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh…"). Peter then went on to preach to the crowd of Jews that were gathered about Jesus, and how He had been crucified for them in order to usher in this New Covenant opportunity. So, the answer to the question of when the New Covenant (and the Church) began is the Day of Pentecost, as described here in Acts 2. Prior to this initial outpouring of the Spirit, the New Covenant was not available.

Later, Paul, in his epistles, hammered away at this distinction of the Church as possessing the Spirit infilling. He describes the unique sealing of the Church by the Holy Spirit – calling it the down payment of our eternal redemption.

> In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**
>
> Which is the **earnest of our inheritance** [meaning the down payment] **until the redemption of the purchased possession** [meaning until Christ comes back to get us], unto the praise of his glory.
>
> -Ephesians 4:13-14

So, what's unique about the New Covenant, in its current presentation – or the Church? At the heart of it, **it's the Spirit!** The Church enjoys the sealing and indwelling role of the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit was very active throughout the Old Testament, and the Spirit will also be very active following the Rapture during the Tribulation, we need to understand that the Church is unique in receiving this sealing/indwelling presence of the Spirit in our hearts. And this New

Covenant experience of the Spirit indwelling will also be poured out upon those living during the Millennial Kingdom.

So, we've read the passage in Acts 2 that records the outpouring of the Spirit (which we've said marks the establishment of the Church). We see that confirmed by the very last verse in this chapter, which says the following.

> And the Lord added to **the church** daily such as should be saved.
> -Acts 2:47b

Jesus first introduced this Church in his futuristic statement to Peter back in Matthew 16 – "I *will* build my church." And now, here at the end of Acts 2, we find the first reference to the Church as an *already-established entity.* This verse acts as the terminal bookend to our question of "when did the Church begin?" providing confirmation of our identification of the Spirit outpouring here in Acts 2 on Pentecost as being the answer.

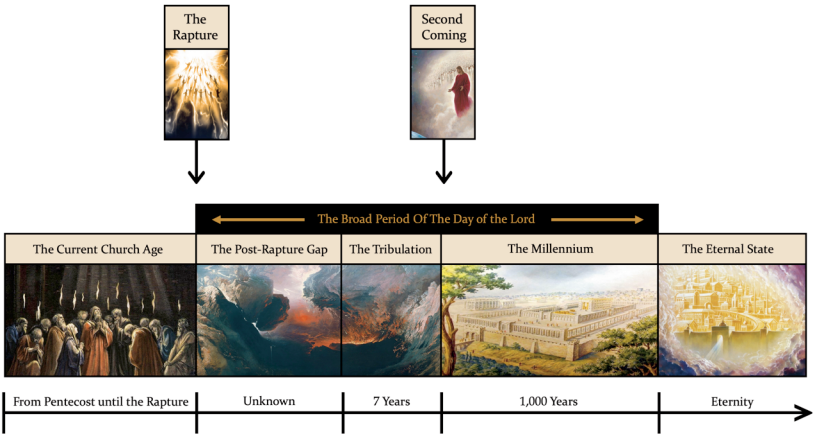
When Will the Church Age End?

We recognize that the Church shares the same beginning point as the New Covenant – that being the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. Since we now understand when the Bible says the Church Age began, let's now examine when the Bible says it will end. As mentioned several times throughout this study, the terminal event of the Church Age on earth is the event known as the Rapture.

First, let's begin by defining the actual English word "rapture." The word rapture in English means a state or experience of being carried away. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body.[6]

The Biblical application of this word in our present context refers to the Rapture of the Church – the literal carrying away of the Church from earth to heaven by God. The Rapture of the Church is the event in which God "snatches away" all Church Age believers from the earth sometime prior to the outpouring of His righteous judgment upon the earth during the broad Day of the Lord (the judgment phase

that culminates with the Tribulation period – or Daniel's seventieth week).



Rapture is a term not found in the English Bible, but is a term that we use to refer to this supernatural, instantaneous "catching away" of the Church described in scripture. You may ask, "if the word Rapture is not found in the English Bible, then where do we get this term?" While the word rapture is not in the English Bible, it is in the Latin Bible. In fact, this English term rapture is derived from the Latin usage, which is used to describe the catching away of the Church in the Latin Vulgate.

The original New Testament manuscripts were written in Greek, but later translated into Latin, English, and other languages. Jerome (c. 347-420 AD) translated the Greek Bible into Latin. The English word "rapture" comes from the Latin *raptus*, past participle of *rapere* meaning "to seize, or carry off." Jerome used this Latin word to translate the original Greek word *harpazó* (Strong's #G726 – meaning, "to pluck up, to seize, to catch away") in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and other passages.[7] [8] So, the English word, "rapture," simply comes from the Latin translation of the Koine Greek word, *harpazó*, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and other places. Almost all modern Bibles translate this word as "caught up".

The English word "harpoon" comes from this Greek word *harpazó*.[9] The harpoon is the tool used by whalers to catch a whale and bring it up out of the water. At the Rapture, we will be supernaturally harpooned – plucked up by force out of this world by the Lord Jesus (but without the metal hook of course).

At this event, those that remain alive on earth will be instantaneously transformed into having glorious, heavenly bodies, and will be translated into the clouds along with the dead in Christ who are also resurrected with glorified bodies. The resurrected saints and the living saints are drawn up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and are brought back to heaven with Him. Let's take a look at the passage we just mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4, as it serves as one of the foundational passages for understanding this concept of the Rapture of the Church.

> But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.
>
> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.
>
> For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.
>
> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
>
> Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** [Greek: harpazó] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
>
> Wherefore comfort one another with these words.
>
> -1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Elsewhere in the New Testament, this term *harpazó* is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39), and to describe Paul's experience of being

caught up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Thus, there can be no doubt that the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to indicate the actual physical departure of people from earth to heaven.

It is also at this Rapture event that we will be instantly changed into a "glorified" (likely inter-dimensional) body and caught up to the Lord. We see this in 1 Corinthians, as Paul expounds upon this mystery.

> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
>
> Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep**, but **we shall all be changed,**
>
> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
>
> For **this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**
>
> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
>
> -1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Here, Paul is clear that not all will experience death ("we shall not all sleep"), but all will experience the glorification of the body ("we shall all be changed … this mortal must put on immortality").

We can see how these two passages (1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15) mesh together, giving us the clear understanding that God will resurrect all believers who have died, give them glorified bodies, and take them from the earth along with all living believers, who will also be given glorified bodies at that time.

Jesus had introduced this teaching of the Rapture most clearly in His "Upper Room Discourse," recorded in John 14.

> Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**

-John 14:1-3

This was Jesus's first clear disclosure of what that disciples would eventually come to recognize as what we today call the Rapture. He promises to one day return to take away His believers to be with Him forever.

Many Christians believe the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are the same event. We believe that this is a grave error that is in many ways linked to the failure to recognize the distinction between Israel and the Church – and that it will ultimately lead to a failure to understand the Bible. These two revelations – the distinction between Israel and the Church, as well as the pretribulational Rapture – are two beliefs that when combined, allow one to properly understand the larger story of the Bible and God's timeline for eschatology.

While we can't get too sidetracked with this topic right now, we should recognize that the Rapture is to be distinguished from the Second Coming (which we might call the Second Coming "proper"). While both are events that take place as part of Christ's Second Advent, they are distinct and do not occur at the same time. We will discuss this topic in more detail toward the end of this study.

The Rapture of the Church is the glorious event we should all be longing for. We will finally be free from sin as our earthly bodies will be transformed into glorious resurrection bodies, to remain in God's presence forever. The Rapture is the next event to take place on the horizon for the Church – it is our "blessed hope," and what we yearn for (Titus 2:12-13).

A proper understanding of the Rapture is important to this study because it also helps to reveal the distinction between Israel and the Church. As mentioned earlier, you cannot understand Daniel's seventy weeks as a whole, or God's purposes for the final seventieth week (the Tribulation) if you believe the Church will be on earth during this

time period. As we will demonstrate later on, a proper understanding of Daniel's seventy weeks will reveal that all seventy pertain to Israel specifically – and not the Church. In fact, we will actually find that the two are mutually exclusive. One who imagines the Church being on Earth during the final seventieth week commits the error of commingling God's program for the Church with God's program for Israel. As a rule, this without fail leads to confusion and error in Bible interpretation.

This is made even clearer when understanding God's *purpose* for the Tribulation, one of which is to use this period of unparalleled distress to drive Israel towards the recognition of her true Messiah, Christ. In other words, a major purpose for this final week is to bring Israel to faith. In fact, we will find that a precondition for Christ's Second Coming involves Israel's repentance, her recognition of Christ as Messiah, and her petitioning His return.

The purpose of the Tribulation has nothing at all to do with the Church. In fact, as we learn from scripture, the Tribulation and the Church are actually antithetical – they cannot mix. For example, the Tribulation is described as being the wrath of God, but the Church is described as being exempt from the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9). We will discuss this more later on.

So, understanding the timing of the Rapture as taking place prior to the seventieth week is a vital part of understanding the distinction and mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church. When God's attention turns back to Israel during the seventieth week, the Church must already have been removed from the picture. This will all be discussed in greater detail later in this study. Our purpose here was simply to understand the subject of the Rapture, as it serves as the terminal bookend, or the ending point of the Church Age on earth.

The New Covenant After the Church Age

In the previous subsections, we've indulged in an in-depth exploration of the New Covenant instituted via the Church. We've examined the beginning of the New Covenant and the Church (which share a begin-

ning point), and we've examined the removal of the Church from the world scene at the Rapture (the end of the Church Age). But what comes after this, in relation to the New Covenant? How will the New Covenant factor into the times that follow the Rapture?

As we begin to explore these questions, let's start with a review of an aspect of the New Covenant that we've already mentioned a number of times. That is, we should keep in mind that the New Covenant is not synonymous with the Church. Although we are currently in the Church Age right now – a time characterized by the giving of the New Covenant – we cannot say that the New Covenant will end when the Church is raptured from Earth. The Bible describes it as an eternal and everlasting covenant. So then how does this relate to future time periods that follow the Rapture, such as the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom?

We will give our answer first, and then give the explanation. In short, the answer is the Spirit outpouring in the sense that we know **it will likely not be available during the Tribulation.** Although the Spirit will absolutely be at work drawing people's hearts, and great revival will take place, we cannot say it will be filling individuals in the way that it does currently in the Church Age. However, the Spirit outpouring **will absolutely be available following the Tribulation, during the Millennium,** as this is one of the most consistent prophetic themes in the Old Testament prophets. Let's look into this deeper.

In the Old Testament prophetic passages that spoke of the New Covenant, we have seen clearly that these promises were made to Israel (the northern and southern kingdoms). For instance, in the Jeremiah 31 passage, this is clear.

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the **house of Israel,** and with the **house of Judah:**
>
> -Jeremiah 31:31

So, as we've already mentioned, these promises of the Spirit outpouring were made to Israel, and their ultimate fulfillments will

take place in the Millennium, as that is the clear context. For instance, consider Jeremiah 31:34, only several verses following the passage we just read.

> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for **they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them,** saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
>
> -Jeremiah 31:34

This prophecy was part of what Paul was referring to as he taught the church at Rome about the future plans of God for Israel, in Romans 11.

> For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**
>
> **And so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
>
> **For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.**
>
> -Romans 11:25-27

Paul emphasizes that after the "fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (a reference to the conclusion of the Church Age), *then* God will again turn His attention back on Israel, as Israel's final week will take place, at the end of which, *all* Israel (a righteous remnant)will be saved. Let's think about this. When was this prophecy ever fulfilled? When did all of Israel know the Lord, from the least to the greatest? This obviously has never happened, but will happen at the end of the Great Tribulation, when the remnant of Jews repent and turn to Jesus as Messiah – as foretold numerous times all throughout the scriptures. The New Covenant Spirit will be poured out on them during the Millennium, after they are brought to faith through the Tribulation. During this Millennial context, all of Israel

will know God – from the least to the greatest. Although there are numerous prophetic passages that describe this in the Old Testament, let's just look at a few, as we will discuss this in more depth later on.

The following passage in Isaiah speaks of the future Millennial context, using the phrase "in that day," which typically is used to refer to the future broad period of the Day of the Lord, which includes the Tribulation and Millennium. It speaks of the remnant of Israel that survived the Tribulation by coming to faith in their true Messiah.

> **In that day** shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely **for them that are escaped of Israel.**
>
> And it shall come to pass, that **he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:**
>
> When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.
>
> -Isaiah 4:2-4

The following passage from Zechariah describes the repentant remnant of Israel mourning over the recognition of the sins of their forefathers and their continual rejection of Him as their Messiah. It then describes a fountain being opened to them – which as we will see, is a continual theme throughout the scriptures, with water imagery referring to salvation through the New Covenant Spirit outpouring. Again, it uses the "in that day" prophetic language, looking ahead to the Day of the Lord.

> And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**

> **In that day** shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.
>
> And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;
>
> The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;
>
> All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.
>
> **In that day there shall be a fountain** opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.
>
> -Zechariah 12:10-13:1

In this passage, we find a clear prophecy discussing the future spiritual return of Israel to their true Messiah, Christ, at the end of the Tribulation, and their subsequent spiritual restoration during the Millennial Kingdom. Israel *will* receive the blessings of the New Covenant in the Millennium. Again, the reference to a "fountain" in this passage is a consistent theme in both the Old and New Testaments, always referring to salvation through the New Covenant Spirit outpouring, or as the New Testament phrases it, "baptism."

For instance, as the giver of this Spirit outpouring, the Lord Himself is called the "fountain of living waters" in Jeremiah, in the context of His rejection by the Jews.

> O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, **the fountain of living waters.**
>
> -Jeremiah 17:13

In other places, similar water imagery is used, such as "living water" and the "wells of salvation." For instance, we see this in Isaiah, describing Israel receiving this "living water" of the Spirit in the Millennial context.

> **Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.**
>
> And **in that day** shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.
>
> Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.
>
> Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel **in the midst of thee.**
>
> -Isaiah 12:3-6

In this passage, we see the reference to Israel "with joy, drawing water out of the wells of salvation" – pointing to the New Covenant Spirit outpouring to be released upon the Jewish remnant and the believers in the Millennium. We can see in this excerpt, the many references to "salvation." In fact, the Hebrew word for "salvation" here is *yeshuah* (Strong's #H3444), which is Jesus's name in Hebrew. Again, we see the "in that day" phrase used, referring to the eschatological Day of the Lord. Yet another clue is found in the last verse, which states that God is dwelling in the midst of them at that future time – which can mean only one time – the future Millennial Kingdom.

Yet another prophetic reference to living water being poured out during the Millennium is found in Zechariah 14.

> And it shall be **in that day,** that **living waters shall go out from Jerusalem;** half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.
>
> **And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day** shall there be one Lord, and his name one.
>
> -Zechariah 14:8-9

These water-related idioms referring to fountains, wells, and living water were very well-recognized by the Jews of Jesus's day. The Jewish audience of the New Testament would have been extremely familiar

with these common figures of speech referring to the future outpouring of the Spirit by the Messiah. Jesus, during His earthly ministry, spoke of this coming outpouring, linking it to the events at Pentecost that would soon take place following His death, resurrection, and ascension. For instance, Jesus once encountered a woman who had come to draw water from a well. He told her about this coming outpouring of the Spirit, continuing the theme of fountains of living water as representing the Spirit.

> Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:
>
> But **whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**
>
> -John 4:13-14

Then during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up and proclaimed the following.

> In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.**
>
> He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**
>
> **(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)**
>
> -John 7:37-39

In this passage, John unmistakably identifies this promise of coming living water as a reference to the impending Spirit outpouring that would take place in Acts 2 on Pentecost. So, we can see the consistent use of this idiom throughout the Bible, helping us recognize its Old Testament prophetic usages as clearly referring to the Millennial outpouring to come for Israel – as that was the context of every one of its mentions. But it also clearly refers (in our more immediate context) to the Spirit outpouring on Pentecost, as clearly intro-

duced here by Jesus. The common denominator is the New Covenant Spirit outpouring.

Much more can be said about this, including an incredible mystery of an ancient Jewish ritual on the Feast of Tabernacles (which represents the Millennium), called the "Pouring of Water," which is a picture of the Holy Spirit approaching Jerusalem during the Kingdom and being poured out upon the people. To learn more about this, please consult the companion study, entitled, "Typology Of The Moedim - The Levitical Feasts As Prophetic Macrocodes".

So, Jesus pointed to Himself (and His Spirit, which He would pour out) as the source of the "living water" that would sustain their spiritual lives. This outpouring of living water, as we see, referred to the refreshing power of the Holy Spirit – the basis of the New Covenant – that would become an indwelling source of life for those who would receive Him. And as we can clearly see, this is a consistent theme spoken of throughout the Old Testament prophets, looking forward to the outpouring of the Spirit on Israel (and then all nations) during the Millennium.

But then what about during the Tribulation? Will the Spirit outpouring be available then? As mentioned earlier, we conclude that it will not. Certainly, the Spirit will be at work during the Tribulation enlightening the truth of Jesus Christ, just as it always has, yet the Spirit baptism or infilling in the individual appears to be absent during this time. Let's begin to examine this.

Regarding the Tribulation, we have reason to believe from the testimony of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, that the one restraining the world from sin (the Holy Spirit), will be "taken out of the way" prior to the Tribulation and the emergence of the Antichrist. Although we can't fully delve into it here, it seems obvious that this "Restrainer" refers to the Holy Spirit in His indwelling ministry within the hearts of Christians in a way unique to the Church Age.[10]

In other words, the idea is that when the Rapture takes place and the Church is removed, this "restraining presence" in the hearts of believers will also be removed, thereby allowing the commencement of the Tribulation and the emergence of the man of sin – the

Antichrist. So, this is one very strong piece of scriptural evidence that the Spirit will not have an indwelling presence during the Tribulation, following the Rapture.

Like we said, this doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit won't be at work during the Tribulation. We in fact know that it will. For example, the book of Revelation mentions a large Jewish revival that will take place during the Tribulation as a result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. We can assume that many non-Jews will come to faith during this time as well, as Revelation speaks repeatedly of the Antichrist's killing campaign against the saints of God during this time. In addition, in Revelation 11, the characters we refer to as the Two Witnesses will perform supernatural acts while being empowered by God's Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit will absolutely still be active during this time, but in a way fundamentally different than at present during the Church Age.

The Tribulation period seems to revert back to Old Testament-like conditions. During the Old Testament period, saints of God were never permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Instead, certain individuals were at certain times moved upon (or empowered/anointed) by the Spirit to accomplish specific tasks. A key here is to understand that the Tribulation is a continuation of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy, **which Daniel 9:24 tells us is a time period specifically designated for the Jews and Jerusalem.** We will discuss this in great detail later in this study, as it's a foundational concept in recognizing the distinction between Israel and the Church.

But the point here is that if the Tribulation is a continuation of Israel's seventy weeks, it must of course be mutually exclusive in reference to the Church and the New Covenant, or the Spirit outpouring. People during this time can be "saved" just like in previous ages by trusting in God, but they will not be part of the Church, and they will not be "obeying the Gospel" as we do in the context of the Church.

It would appear that people are saved in the Tribulation in very much the same way they were saved prior to the Church Age. But while those who lived in the Old Testament times had limited revela-

tion, those who will be living during the Tribulation will have the full understanding of Jesus Christ as Messiah. It will be their faith in Him that acts as the foundation of their salvation. **The distinction between then and now is that their faith will not involve an indwelling Spirit baptism as experienced during the Church Age.** While many come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation, the Spirit outpouring does not seem to occur until afterwards in the Millennial Kingdom.

So, the overarching point here is to be sensitive to the fact that the Church is not perfectly synonymous with the New Covenant in the overall panorama of God's plan. The Church is a unique entity *within* the New Covenant, and is the *current recipient* of the New Covenant. If you enter into New Covenant salvation right now, it will only be through the Church. But after the Church Age is complete, the New Covenant will extend past that point, serving as the everlasting and enduring basis of salvation for all people (although the period of time between the Rapture and the Millennium may involve some differences, as discussed).

But the promise was originally made to Israel, and part of God's agenda (based on the multitude of Old Testament prophecies) is clearly to bless Israel through administering the New Covenant to them during the Millennium. And like mentioned, the New Covenant will be the eternally enduring and final covenant for all time. All who will be saved will be saved on the basis of this ultimate and final covenant.

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CHAPTER 3

ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH - DISTINCT ORIGINS, PURPOSES, AND DESTINIES

As we have been asserting throughout this study, Israel is not the Church, and the Church is not Israel. Some have come to the mistaken conclusion that in the New Testament, the Church is referred to as Israel. This is not the case at all. In the seventy-three mentions of Israel in the New Testament, the term is always used to refer to either the nation of Israel as a whole, or (rarely) to the believing remnant within the nation – in other words, Hebrew believers in Jesus. It is never used of the Church in general or of Gentile believers. It is never used of a mixed Jew/Gentile audience, whether believers or unbelievers.

As we have already seen earlier in this study, the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:32, offers a vital axiom that anchors our understanding of the distinction the Bible draws between Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church.

> Give none offence, neither to the **Jews,** nor to the **Gentiles,** nor to the **church** of God:
>
> -1 Corinthians 10:32

We clearly see three groups differentiated here by Paul – in perfect

alignment with the greater backdrop of the covenants communicated in scripture, which we have reviewed. This entire 10th Chapter of 1 Corinthians reinforces this explicit distinction that many Christians, unfortunately, choose to ignore.

In this chapter, we will first draw attention to the Biblical portrayal that Israel and the Church each have distinct origins, purposes, and destinies. In this study, we wish to not only emphasize the differences between the two, but also emphasize the unique and special way that Christ views His bride, the Church.

We will do this in two parts – first, we will contrast Israel and the Church. Secondly, we will contrast the Old and New Covenants. We have already seen that the Old Covenant is the earthly, physical covenant given to Israel, while the New Covenant is the spiritual, heavenly covenant first received by the Church. We will further examine the distinctions between these two covenants in order to further sharpen our understanding of the distinction between Israel and the Church.

So, first let's examine the Biblical points of contrast between Israel and the Church. You will notice that the characteristics and expectations of Israel are always physical and earthly, while the characteristics and expectations of the Church are spiritual and heavenly.

As we will explore further later on, be sensitive to the idea that Israel is a physical symbol – or a type – of the institution founded upon better promises – the Church. In many of our comparisons, you will be able to detect this. We will examine fifteen points of distinction.

#1

Israel: Israel is a specific nation chosen by God and sustained by covenant promises (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Romans 9:6; 11:28).

The Church: The Church is a called-out assembly of believers out of every nation, who have been baptized into the body of Christ (1

Corinthians 12:13). Every true member of the body of Christ is saved (we don't mean every member of a particular local church"). There are multitudes of professing believers who will not be saved.

#2

Israel: Israel traces its origin as a people to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jacob, later renamed Israel, being the father of the twelve tribes), and its origin as a nation to the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19).

The Church: The Church traces its origin to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Spirit was first poured out and believers were first placed into the body of Christ by obedience to the gospel plan of salvation.

#3

Israel: God's program for Israel centered in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37) and will again center in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-20) and during the Millennium (Isaiah 2:1-5).

The Church: God's program for His Church began in Jerusalem and extended to the uttermost parts of the earth (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The Church is identified with the risen Christ, not with any earthly city. However, in the ultimate eternal sense, the New Jerusalem – a spiritual Jerusalem not made with human hands – is the Church's ultimate dwelling place (Revelation 21).

#4

Israel: The hope and expectancy of Israel was/is earthly, centering on the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah foretold by the prophets (Jeremiah 23:5-8; Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:1-16).

The Church: The hope and expectancy of the Church is heavenly, centering on the glorious appearing of Christ at the Rapture to take His people to heaven (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

#5

Israel: God's purpose and program for Israel was revealed in the Old Testament scriptures.

The Church: God's purpose and program for the Church was hidden in the Old Testament, and was revealed through the New Testament apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:5). Paul considered it his high privilege to reveal the uniqueness of the Church.

#6

Israel: Israel's history involved animal sacrifices, which acted as a shadow of what was to come in the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate spotless Lamb.

The Church: The Church's history does not involve animal sacrifices. Rather, the Old Testament practice of animal sacrifices to atone for sins is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Messiah's sacrifice is commemorated by means of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

#7

Israel: Israel's history involves a physical Temple for worship.

The Church: In the Church, God manifests His glory in His believers, both individually and collectively, designating them (their bodies) as His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:21-22). This is accomplished by the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost.

#8

Israel: Israel's history involves a Levitical (of the Tribe of Levi) priesthood limited to the sons of Aaron, and excluded most Israelites.

The Church: Whereas Israel *had* a priesthood, the Church *is* a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

#9

Israel: Male Jews were circumcised as a symbol of the Abrahamic Covenant. Believing Jews were also figuratively circumcised in the heart (Jeremiah 4:4).

The Church: In the Church, true believers enjoy an internal circumcision of the heart, not made with hands (Colossians 2:11; Philippians 3:3; Galatians 6:15-16). Physical circumcision is not required.

#10

Israel: Israel was under the Law of Moses as a rule of life.

The Church: The Church is under a "better" covenant (Hebrews 8) – the New Covenant.

#11

Israel: Unbelieving Jews were physical children of Abraham and spiritual children of the devil (John 8:37-44).

The Church: Every believer in Christ (every true member of the Church, whether Jew or Gentile) is a figurative "child of Abraham" and a child of God (Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:26-29). This statement *does not* mean that Church Age believers are literal Jews or

Israelites, but rather that they embody what it truly means to be a "child of Abraham."

#12

Israel: Israel was to observe the Sabbath Day in accordance with Old Testament law (Exodus 20:8). Sabbath observance will also apparently take place in the Tribulation (Matthew 24:20) and in the Millennium (Ezekiel 46:1, 3).

The Church: Though the Sabbath Day was the "rest" Israel was instructed to observe, the fulfillment of what that rest was intended to be is manifested in the experience of the believer being filled with the Holy Ghost (Isaiah 28:11-12). Rather than setting aside a certain day and observing Mosaic Law, the Church "rests" in Christ on a daily basis (Colossians 2:16).

#13

Israel: Believing Jews prior to Pentecost, believing Jews during the Tribulation, and believing Jews during the Kingdom reign of Christ are not members of the body of Christ (the Church).

The Church: Believing Jews and Gentiles from Pentecost to the Rapture who have obeyed the gospel are members of the body of Christ (the Church).

#14

Israel: Israel's place of worship centered in Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10; John 4:20) and this will also be true in the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27) and in the Millennium (Isaiah 2:1-5).

The Church: The Church's place of worship is "Where two or three

are gathered together in My Name" (Matthew 18:20; John 4:21-24). Christ is in the midst of His churches (Revelation 1:13, 20).

#15

Israel: Israel is likened to the wife of Yahweh, often an unfaithful wife or a whore (Hosea).

The Church: The Church is the beloved bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-8) to be one day presented as a blameless and spotless virgin (Ephesians 5:27).

Although there are probably many more comparative points that can be made, these that we have examined provide the foundational distinctives that make Israel and the Church unique.

Let's now point out a list of contrasts between the Old Covenant (of which Israel was the recipient) and the New Covenant (of which the Church was the first recipient). This will further sharpen our perception of the distinction between Israel and the Church – and help us understand why scripture describes the New Covenant as a better covenant built upon better promises.

- The Old Covenant came by **Moses,** while the New Covenant came by **Jesus Christ** (John 1:17).

- The Old Covenant is a covenant of **Letter,** while the New Covenant is a covenant of the **Spirit** (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- The Old Covenant **leads to death,** while the New Covenant **gives life** (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- The Old Covenant was **ended** by Jesus Christ (Romans 10:4), while the New Covenant was **established** by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6).

- The Old Covenant **enslaves** (Galatians 5:1), while the New Covenant **makes free** (John 8:32, 36).

- The Old Covenant leaves man **imperfect,** while the New Covenant leaves man **perfect** (Hebrews 7:19).

- The Old Covenant **exposes** sin (Galatians 3:19), while the New Covenant **covers** sin (Romans 4:1-8).

- The Old Covenant **cannot give** life (2 Corinthians 3:7), while the New Covenant **gives** life (Galatians 6:8, 2 Corinthians 3:6)

- The Old Covenant was **abolished,** while the New Covenant is **in effect and everlasting** (Ephesians 2:15).

- The Old Covenant **brings** a curse (Galatians 3:10), while the New Covenant **redeems** from the curse (Galatians 3:13).

- The Old Covenant is a **shadow** (Colossians 2:14-17), while the New Covenant is the **reality** (Hebrews 10:1-18).

- The Old Covenant is a **covered** glory, while the New Covenant is glory **uncovered** (2 Corinthians 3:7-18).

- The Old Covenant had **many** high priests (Hebrews 7:23), while the New Covenant has only **one** High Priest (Jesus Christ) (Hebrews 7:24-28).

- The Old Covenant had **earthly** high priests (Hebrews 5:1-4), while the New Covenant has a **heavenly** High Priest (Hebrews 9:24, 10:12).

- The Old Covenant had an **earthly** Tabernacle/Temple (Hebrews 9:2), while the New Covenant has a **heavenly** Tabernacle/Temple (Hebrews 8:2).

- In the Old Covenant, the priesthood was of **the Order of Aaron,** while in the New Covenant, the priesthood is of **the Order of Melchizedek** (Hebrews 7:11, 21).

- In the Old Covenant, **priests and High Priests were sinners** (Hebrews 5:1-4), while in the New Covenant, **the High Priest Christ has no sin** (Hebrews 7:26).

- The Old Covenant was **fulfilled** (Matthew 5:17-18), while the New Covenant is **perpetually active** (Hebrews 8:6; 10:9).

- In the Old Covenant, the Law was written on **stone tablets,** while in the New Covenant, God's Law is written on **people's hearts** (Jeremiah 31:33).

- In the Old Covenant, **Moses and the prophets** were mediators (Exodus 20:18-19; Galatians 3:19), while in the New Covenant, **Jesus Christ** is the only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15).

- The Old Covenant needed **blood offerings** for sin (Leviticus 17:11), while in the New Covenant, **Jesus'ss blood alone** was the one perfect sin offering (Hebrews 9:12).

- In the Old Covenant, the Tabernacle/Temple was **made with hands** (Hebrews 9:1-2), while in the New Covenant the Tabernacle/Temple is one **made without hands** (Hebrews 9:11).

- The Old Covenant **remembers sin** (Hebrews 10:3), while the New Covenant **does not remember sin** (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

- The Old Covenant was exclusively for **Israel** (Deuteronomy 4:7-8), while the New Covenant is for **all nations** (Matthew 28:19-20).

So, we can see that Israel and the Church each have a laundry list of distinctions. We have now also seen that the covenants given to each – the Old to Israel and the New to the Church – reflect these distinctions. Everything about the Old Covenant served as an earthly, physical picture, or symbol of its ultimate spiritual fulfillment in the New Covenant. Everything about the Old Covenant was inferior and temporary, while everything about the New Covenant is superior and everlasting.

In the next chapter, we will build upon this foundation, delving into the topic of typology.

CHAPTER 4

ISRAEL - A TYPE OF THE CHURCH

In the Bible, a "type" may be defined as "a figure or ensample (meaning a pattern or model) of something future and more or less prophetic, called the 'antitype."[1] Wick Broomall, in *Baker Dictionary of Theology*, defines it as follows.

> A type is a shadow cast on the pages of Old Testament history by a truth whose full embodiment or antitype is found in the New Testament revelation.[2]

Typology helps us perceive the unity of the scriptures, especially the unity and continuity between the Testaments (or Covenants). In other words, the subject of prophetic typology in the Bible turns out to be a strong evidence of the Bible's **integration**, which is one characteristic that demonstrates its authorship from outside of time. Before moving on, let's quickly define what we mean by "the integration" of the Bible.

The Bible being integrated means that it contains various parts or aspects that are linked or coordinated by a common author. The fact that the Bible is really a series of sixty-six different books written by over forty men who mostly didn't know each other, over the course of

around 1,500 years indicates that if it is truly integrated, then the true origin of this book's inspiration is of necessity, from outside of our time domain.

In other words, if we do conclude that there is evidence of its integration, then that requires a common author – but because it was written over the course of 1,500 years by different people who mainly weren't in contact with each other, then it provably cannot come from man. It must be from a Being outside the constraints of time altogether, who has the ability to inspire man and interact in human history. If we find this proposition regarding integration to prove true, it has profound implications on the way we view this collection of books we call the Bible.

Let's put it one last way to ensure this is understood. Imagine your favorite novel or storybook ... imagine you one day found out that the chapters were written by different people who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, over a period of 1,500 years ... yet, the storyline was flawless, or, to use our term, integrated. Obviously, this is impossible – especially when the earlier chapters predict how the later chapters would turn out with amazing precision – and its predictions actually align with the record of human history. This points to a common Author outside of time who was guiding and inspiring the human writers to compose this unified story. This is what we mean by integration. Let's continue.

An understanding of prophetic types is essential to an understanding of the Bible. Many of the prominent characters in the Old Testament function in certain ways as types that anticipate the then-future Jesus Christ, who is the antitype. But Jesus is not the only subject of typological prophecy. There are many other anticipatory types embedded in scripture, involving individuals, groups, events, institutions, objects, animals, et al., all acting as types of certain concepts or truths that would later become central themes in the Biblical narrative.

One of the most obvious prophetic subjects of typology in scripture is the contrast between physical and earthly Israel under the Old Covenant (the type) and the spiritual and heavenly Church under the

New Covenant (the antitype). You might even say the Old Testament vs. the New Testament. In this chapter, we will examine the scriptural basis for this, which is extensive. In order to do this, we will examine the handful of Greek words that are used in the New Testament to convey the concept of typology, and see what they have to say about the relationship between the Old and New Covenants.

Greek Words Conveying the Typology of Israel Versus the Church

The Greek language – the language in which the New Testament was written – is very useful to us in examining this concept of Israel being a prophetic type of the Church. For those not familiar with the concept of typology, the easiest synonym may be a "prototype," which is really what we mean when we use the word "type" in the Biblical prophetic sense. The Greek language has a number of words that all convey this concept of Israel being a prototype of the Church in scripture. These words – as we will see – all communicate a similar meaning, such as: type, shadow, pattern, example, parable, allegory, figure, model, comparison, likeness, similitude, etc.

"Tupos"

This first example we will look at is the word *tupos* (Strong's #G5179b) the Greek word from which we get the English word type – meaning an anticipatory pattern or symbol.[3]

Although this word is variously used in the New Testament, we see it used in our present context in Romans 5:14, where Paul declares that Adam "is a figure (*tupos*, or type) of him that was to come", i.e., Christ.

> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of **Adam's** transgression, **who is the figure** [*tupos*] **of him that was to come** [meaning Christ].
>
> -Romans 5:14

So, we are clearly told that Adam was a type, or a prototype, of Christ. This is shown also in 1 Corinthians 15:45-47.

> And so it is written, The **first man Adam** was made a **living soul;** the **last Adam** was made a **quickening spirit.**
>
> **Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.**
>
> The **first man is of the earth, earthy;** the **second man is the Lord from heaven.**
>
> -1 Corinthians 15:45-47

As we have already mentioned, the Old Covenant (or Israel) was the physical, earthly symbol or type of the ultimate antitype – the spiritual, heavenly, New Covenant Church. It's important to get what Paul is really saying here. Adam, was more than just a direct type of Christ – Adam was a symbol of the "first," while Christ is a symbol of the "second," or the last, or the ultimate. Israel was the first, the Church was the second, or the last, or the ultimate. Adam was the original figure representing the Old Testament, while Christ is the ultimate figure representing the New Testament. So, this is also contrast between the Old and New Covenants and reflects the contrast between Israel and the Church.

There is another passage – also in 1 Corinthians – that continues to reveal this truth that Israel is a type of the Church.

> Now all these things happened unto them [Israel] for **examples** [*tupos*]: and they are written for our [meaning the Church's] admonition…
>
> -1 Corinthians 10:11

The word translated "examples" comes from *tupos*. To understand that this passage is clearly contrasting Israel and the Church, we need to see the full context by looked reading Verses 1-11.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for **examples** [*tupos*]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

-1 Corinthians 10:1-11

So, Paul clearly presents the Old Testament events of national Israel's failures as having relevance for the New Covenant Church, and then summarizes his statements in Verse 11, declaring them to be a *tupos*, or an example, for us (the Church). But it gets even clearer as we continue.

"Skia"

The second word we will look at is *skia* (Strong's #G4639), rendered "shadow" in Colossians 2:17. This word, according to *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, can mean "an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object."[4] In other words, the shadow would

be like the type and the object casting the shadow is the antitype. This is exactly how it is used in Colossians 2:17.

> Which are a **shadow** [*skia*] of things to come; but the body is of Christ.
>
> -Colossians 2:17

To understand what is the shadow (*skia*, or the type) and what is the object (the antitype), let's examine the point Paul is making by looking at Verses 11-17 of this chapter in order to see what he is referring to.

> In whom also ye are circumcised with the **circumcision** made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
>
> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
>
> And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
>
> Blotting out the handwriting of **ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
>
> And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
>
> Let no man therefore judge you in **meat,** or in **drink,** or in respect of an **holyday,** or of the **new moon,** or of the **sabbath days:**
>
> **Which are a shadow of things to come;** but the **body is of Christ.**
>
> -Colossians 2:11-17

First, Paul contrasts the Old Covenant symbol of circumcision with the New Covenant ritual of baptism. We know that circumcision only

has physical benefits and effects, while the New Testament is clear that baptism has spiritual effects.

Next, he discusses how the "ordinances" of the Old Covenant Law were "nailed to the cross" by Christ. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says the word "ordinances" (Strong's #G1378) is used in other places in the New Testament to describe the rules and requirements of the Old Covenant Law of Moses.[5]

Paul then focuses on the dietary restrictions and ritual holy days (including new moons and sabbaths) that were required observances under the Old Covenant. But he indicates that members of the New Covenant are not obligated to observe these requirements. He instead describes them as being a shadow (*skia*) of things to come in New Covenant times.

So, they were earthly and physical, but represented (or were intended to teach about) a spiritual fulfillment in the New Covenant ("but the body is of Christ").

"Hupodeigma"

The third word we will look at is *hupodeigma* (Strong's #G5262), which is translated "example," and is used in conjunction with "shadow" in Hebrews 8:5 (cf. Hebrews 9:23). This word also means a figure, an example, or a model.[6] In Hebrews 8:5, we actually see three of the terms we have examined, all in the same verse, and all conveying a similar concept.

> Who serve unto the **example** [*hupodeigma*] and **shadow** [*skia*] of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the **pattern** [*tupos*] shewed to thee in the mount.
>
> -Hebrews 8:5

Again, to fully recognize the context of this passage, and to prove that it's describing Israel under the Old Covenant as being a type looking towards the Church under the New Covenant, we need to

read more of this chapter. In fact, because it so clearly argues this point, we will read the entire thing.

> Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest [Christ], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;
>
> A minister of the sanctuary, and of the **true tabernacle,** which the Lord pitched, and not man.
>
> For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.
>
> For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
>
> **Who serve unto the example** [*hupodeigma*] **and shadow** [*skia*] **of heavenly things,** as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the **pattern** [*tupos*] shewed to thee in the mount.
>
> **But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.**
>
> For if that **first covenant** had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the **second.**
>
> For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
>
> **Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;** because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
>
> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
>
> And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, **A new covenant, he hath made the first old.** Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is **ready to vanish away.**

-Hebrews 8

Ok, so there's a lot here to discuss, but let's just summarize several key points. First, he begins by talking about the ultimate High Priest – Jesus Christ. We need to recognize that the Old Covenant was based upon an earthly priesthood that had a high priest. There was a Tabernacle in which they performed the priestly sacrifices and rituals according to the commandments of the Old Covenant Law. So, the message Paul is conveying here, is that clearly, the earthly, natural, Old Covenant ritual was a picture of something spiritual and heavenly. If there was any question that this was the context, he removes all doubt in what follows. After giving us that picture, he then – starting in Verse 6 – launches into the contrast between the Old and New Covenants, declaring that the Old was faulty. He says that this High Priest, Christ, came to establish a New Covenant that is better, being founded upon better promises.

Note: We need to recognize that one of the purposes for the manifestation of the Son of God (God in human form) was to be the arbiter, or mediator, of this New Covenant. Since He was both fully man and fully God, He was unique in being able to perform this mission.

Paul then quotes the passage we have repeatedly mentioned – Jeremiah 31:33 – one of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of a New Covenant. Finally, in the last verse, he finishes by saying that the coming of a New Covenant is what made the previous one Old. He also goes as far as to say that the Old Covenant is no more – it is decaying and vanishing away, with the introduction of the New and better Covenant.

So, again, we see the Greek words in the New Testament clearly

describing the typology of Israel, or the Old Covenant and the antitype, the Church, or the New Covenant.

"Parabole"

The fourth word we need to look at is *parabole* (Strong's #G3850 – compare to our English word "parable"). This word is found in Hebrews 9:9, where certain elements of the Tabernacle are described as "a **figure (*parabole*)** for the time then present" (cf. 11:19). This word means a comparison, likeness, similitude, or a parable.[7]

> Which was a **figure** [*parabole*] for the time then present [the Old Covenant], in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
>
> -Hebrews 9:9

Hebrews Chapter 9 continues the writer's dissertation regarding the contrast between the Old and New Covenants that we just read in Hebrews 8. Again, because it is so relevant to our topic here, we really need to look at this whole chapter.

> Then verily the **first covenant** had also **ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.**
>
> For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
>
> And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;
>
> Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
>
> And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.
>
> Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

The Holy Ghost this signifying, that **the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:**

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which stood only in **meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.**

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a **greater and more perfect tabernacle,** not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And for this cause **he is the mediator of the new testament,** that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the **first testament,** they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Whereupon neither the **first testament** was dedicated without blood.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the **law,** he took the blood of calves and of goats, with

water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

It was therefore necessary that the **patterns** of things in the heavens should be purified with these; **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

-Hebrews 9

This was a long passage, but necessary to read in order to understand this concept. So, we see again that in this chapter, the physical, earthly rituals, symbols, and ordinances of the Old Covenant are contrasted with the spiritual, heavenly New Covenant antitypes they represented.

"Antitupos"

Finally, we will note the use of the word *antitupos* (Strong's #G499

– compare to our English word **"antitype"**), rendered "figures" in Hebrews 9:24, and "like figure" in 1 Peter 3:21. This word, as used in the New Testament, denotes that which corresponds to the type (as we've already mentioned). The antitype is the ultimate reality which fulfills the prophetic type.[8]

We see (as we just read) in Hebrews 9:24, this word for "figures," speaking of the way the Tabernacle and related objects in the Old Covenant were apparently created after the pattern of a genuine heavenly version.

> For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the **figures** [*antitupos*] of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
>
> -Hebrews 9:24

So, just as the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies once a year on *Yom Kippur* – the Day of Atonement – with the blood of a sacrifice, Christ apparently completed this ritual by bringing His own perfect blood to the heavenly Tabernacle after His death on the cross. This "heavenly" version, which received the perfect blood of Christ, would inaugurate the New Covenant, indicating how everything about this covenant would be spiritual and heavenly. Although the earthly "parable" took place yearly, the ultimate antitype was done once for all time.

We see this term again in 1 Peter 3:21.

> The like **figure** [*antitupos*] whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:
>
> -1 Peter 3:21

To get a good idea of the context here, we need to read a portion of the previous verse.

> When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
>
> **The like figure** [*antitupos*] **whereunto even baptism doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:
>
> -1 Peter 3:20b-21

So, in this passage, Peter tells us that the Flood of Noah's day acted as a type of New Covenant baptism (the antitype). Peter is saying that just as the water carried Noah and his family to salvation in the ark, baptism is crucial for our salvation by washing our sins away (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:27). To take it even further, baptism is one of the key elements that brings you into the safety of the "ark" known as the Church!

So, we have looked at a number of the Greek words that all convey the reality that the New Testament writers convey to us – that Israel, under the earthly and physical Old Covenant served as a prophetic type of the Church under the heavenly and spiritual New Covenant. In the next subsection, we will drive this point home even more conclusively.

Further Exploration of the Typology of Israel and the Church

If you still remain skeptical of what we discussed in the previous subsection, we will drive it home conclusively here, as we will delve even deeper into the topic of Israel as a type of the Church. We have already unmistakably seen that the New Testament writers portrayed Israel as being the earthly, physical, or "fleshly" recipients of the Old Covenant (a covenant full of earthly, physical symbols that pointed towards greater spiritual fulfillments). We have also seen that they portrayed the Church as the spiritual recipients of the New Covenant (which was that greater spiritual fulfillment). This will become abun-

dantly clear, as we investigate some incredible examples of the prophetic integration of scripture. Let's begin.

You may recall that one of the terms linked to the word "type" is the word "pattern." To the Jewish mind, prophecy is not just prediction and fulfillment, but also involves typology and prophetic patterning or prefiguring.[9]

It turns out that there is a recurring pattern in the Old Testament where the younger son receives the blessing from the father that should, by right, have gone to the firstborn son. In Old Testament society, the firstborn son was the one who normally received a double inheritance, and was the one who would inherit his father's role as head of the family.

But we continually see God reversing this order in the stories of the patriarchs and following. What mystery is concealed here? Is this all just an accident? We should know by now that nothing in scripture is accidental. Instead, there is a pattern being formed that is meant to convey to us a prophetic message. We will attempt to uncover what this prophetic mystery means – but first, let's examine some of these examples of the younger son usurping the firstborn in scripture. The following are some examples.

Cain and Abel
(Genesis 4:1-8)

Although Cain was the firstborn, God had regard for his younger brother Abel's sacrificial offering. Cain's jealousy over this prompted him to murder his Abel.

Ishmael and Isaac
(Genesis 17:18-21)

After receiving the prophetic word that Abraham's barren wife Sarah would bear a son during her old age, Abraham wavered in his faith and decided to take matters into his own hands by impregnating his Egyptian servant Hagar. This produced Ishmael, Abraham's first-

born son. But God's message was clear that Sarah would bear a son – Isaac – who would be the one to inherit God's covenant promise.

Esau and Jacob
(Genesis 25-27; Romans 9:10-13; Hebrews 12:15-17)

Isaac's barren wife Rebekah became pregnant with twins – Esau (the elder) and Jacob (the younger). God prophesied to Rebekah that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). Though this was already spoken, in later years Rebekah would decide to take matters into her own hands and help her favored son Jacob conspire to take the birthright away from Esau – which he did.

Joseph and Reuben
(Genesis 49:1-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2)

Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob, but lost the blessing for sleeping with his stepmother. Although Joseph's brother Judah prevailed over his brothers, scripture is clear that Joseph received the birthright.

Ephraim and Manasseh
(Genesis 48:8-20)

As an old man, Joseph's father Jacob was ready to impart his blessings onto Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Although Joseph wanted Jacob to bless his eldest son Manasseh with the blessing of the firstborn, Jacob purposely switched hands and blessed the younger son.

Perez and Zerah
(Genesis 38:27-30)

Perez and Zerah were twins, but during their birth, Zerah stuck his hand out of the womb first, prompting the midwife to tie a scarlet

thread on his wrist to mark him as the firstborn. But he then pulled his hand back inside the womb and his twin brother Perez came out and got the blessing.

David and His brothers
(1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 89:20-29)

When the prophet Samuel came to Jesse's house to find and anoint the second king of Israel, he passed over all of David's elder brothers and instead anointed David. Psalm 89 says that God made David His firstborn. This has a unique twist as well, in that David was also the second king of Israel, and he – not Saul, who was the first king – received the Davidic Covenant of an everlasting throne through Jesus Christ the Messiah.

So, we continually witness this counter-cultural theme of the younger receiving prominence over the older, or the second having prominence over the first. There are many more examples that also can be pointed out. It is clear that this is a deliberate theme in scripture. The question then, is, what are we to make of it? What does it mean?

Fortunately, the Apostle Paul comes to our rescue and helps interpret this for us. He takes one of the above examples, and explains to the church at Galatia that this concept of the younger surpassing the elder is actually a type, or allegory, of Israel and the Church. Israel is obviously the elder, or the first, and the Church is the younger, or the second. Let's take a look at this passage, found in Galatians 4.

> Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that **Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.** But the **son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants.** One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now **Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in**

slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

Now **you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.** But just as at that time **he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.** But what does the scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." **So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.**

-Galatians 4:21-28 (ESV)

Let's break down what Paul is trying to convey in this passage. First, he addresses those who wish to put Christians back under the Law. His point is to make them realize the Old Covenant is inferior, and that as members of the Church, we have the blessings of the superior New Covenant. In other words, why settle for the type when you can have the antitype? Why settle for the shadow when you can have the actual object that's casting the shadow?

Paul then describes the two sons of Abraham – the elder, being Ishmael, who came from Abraham's Egyptian servant Hagar, and the younger, being Isaac, who came from Abraham's wife Sarah (here called a "free woman"). He contrasts the two sons by saying Ishmael was a son born after the "flesh" – a reference to things earthly and physical. Meanwhile, he says Isaac was a son born through promise – referring to God's prophetic word to Sarah that she would miraculously give birth, despite being barren and an old woman. Nothing about this was earthly or physical. This was supernatural, or you might say, heavenly or spiritual. This was the promised son whom God said would inherit the Abrahamic Covenant and become a progenitor of the Messianic lineage.

Next, Paul actually states that these two women (Hagar and Sarah)

are allegories (or types) representing the Old and New Covenants! He ironically says that Hagar (an Egyptian slave) represents the Old Covenant given to Israel at Mt. Sinai after the Israelites escaped Egyptian slavery. He said Hagar corresponds to the earthly city of Jerusalem, which is in bondage under the Law. Meanwhile, he says that Sarah (ironically, the actual mother of Israel), as a free woman, represents the New Covenant, corresponding to the heavenly New Jerusalem (the Jerusalem from above). Later in Revelation, we are told that following the Millennial reign of Christ on earth, this city – the New Jerusalem – will descend from heaven (Revelation 21:2-4). It is described as being the eternal home of the bride of Christ, the Church (cf. Hebrews 12:22; 13:14), making it a perfect idiom for the New Covenant.

Paul also contrasts the children of each woman. The children of Hagar, he ironically equates to the children of the Old Covenant – the nation Israel! Meanwhile, he declares that "we" (the Church, in which he included himself) are children of the "free woman" Sarah. In other words, the Church are children of the New Covenant. He says this despite the fact that Sarah is actually the mother of Isaac, the progenitor of the physical tribes of Israel!

This aligns perfectly with the multitude of other New Testament writings that we've examined which describe the Church as being the "true 'descendants' of Abraham," in a spiritual sense – or in other words, they follow Abraham's pattern in that they operate on the spiritual basis of true faith. So, if Sarah – the mother of physical Israel – is an allegory for being the mother of the New Covenant, then we should understand that Israel (her actual children) acts as a type of the Church (the actual children of the New Covenant).

Let's summarize.

- Hagar = the Old Covenant, and her children = Israel
- Sarah = the New Covenant, and her children = the Church

Paul declares this to be a type, or an allegory – giving us scriptural

confirmation of what we've been asserting – that Israel (Sarah's actual descendants) is a type of the Church!

So, we must take notice of the pervasive nature of the episodes in scripture where the younger son (representing the Church, which came about long after Israel) inherits the promise instead of the first-born (representing Israel, which preceded the Church and as a nation, rejected their Messiah). It is incredible to recognize that this plan of God was embedded in scripture going all the way back to the first brothers in history – a demonstration of the profound integration of scripture and the foreknowledge of this plan in God's mind.

As we transition to the next chapter, we will switch gears a bit and begin to examine the erroneous doctrine called Replacement Theology, its origins, and its implications.

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6. Ibid., pp. 642-643.
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CHAPTER 5

AN EVALUATION OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

In one of our previous chapters, we covered a number of distinctions that scripture presents, highlighting the unique origins, purposes, and destinies of both Israel and the Church, as well as the contrasts between the Old and New Covenants. We will now discuss the belief that is based upon the neglect of these distinctions – the belief called Replacement Theology. In this chapter, we will first go in-depth to debunk this erroneous belief from the clear testimony of scripture. We will then explore some of the devastating historical ramifications that have arisen from embracing this belief.

By not understanding these distinctions, many false doctrines have crept into so-called Christianity, some (like we said) having devastating repercussions. We will find that these false doctrines are often a result of – and/or fueled by – anti-Semitism (the hatred of, or discrimination against the Jews).

Replacement Theology is the belief that God's plans for Israel have ceased and that the Church is Israel's replacement. Adherents of this belief typically end up spiritualizing or allegorizing God's promises to Israel and somehow connecting them to the Church. We will find that it is impossible to interpret the Bible literally and at the same time be a Replacement theologian. Replacement Theology is always a down-

stream result of an allegorical interpretation of the Bible, in which prophetic statements are not taken at face value. The allegorist "spiritualizes" them, ignoring the context, and inserts a meaning of his own choosing. This flawed hermeneutical foundation of allegorism acts as the framework through which beliefs such as Replacement Theology are able to surface and thrive.

So, why does understanding the error of Replacement Theology matter? First and foremost, simply because it's unbiblical, and therefore, wrong. But additionally, we should recognize that a belief in this doctrine will absolutely ensure that one will never understand the Bible as a whole. It is impossible to understand God's purposes and God's future plans as expressed in the prophetic corpus of scripture while embracing this belief. Belief in Replacement Theology will result in inevitable confusion and false doctrine.

But there is an even darker outcome of embracing Replacement Theology – this being the horrible scourge of anti-Semitism, which history readily demonstrates – and which we will point out in detail in the latter half of this chapter. But before delving into that, we will first begin by simply looking into scripture and spend some time refuting this false doctrine of Replacement Theology. As you will see, this is not a difficult task. You simply need to be capable of reading the text and accepting the plain and obvious message. That's all. It really is that easy.

Replacement Theology: The Downstream Result of a Poor Interpretive Methodology

Like we have already mentioned thus far, Replacement Theology can easily be debunked solely based on the fact that it's built upon an illegitimate method of Bible interpretation – allegorism. The Bible itself provides us with the guide for sound Bible interpretation. It is simply this: since all Bible prophecy in the past was fulfilled literally, we should have the expectation that all future prophecies that are still awaiting fulfillment will also be fulfilled literally. And likewise, we should have that expectation regarding Israel's future in God's

program – since the great majority of Bible prophecy has Israel as the focus. But let's take some time to understand what the Bible has to say regarding this topic of whether or not Israel has been replaced in God's program.

First, as we have already seen in a number of passages we've examined throughout this study, the Bible repeatedly and overtly denounces this idea of the Church "replacing" Israel in God's program. We find no scriptural endorsement of this idea, but much that explicitly contradicts it. For instance, we can point to crystal-clear passages such as God's incredible statement that **as long as the sun, moon, and stars exist, the nation of Israel will also exist.** But even more specifically, he tells us that just as the heavens cannot be measured, **He will not permanently cast off the seed of Israel, despite their failures.** This incredible promise is found in Jeremiah Chapter 31, and takes place near the height of Israel's apostasy.

> Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name:
>
> **If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.**
>
> Thus saith the Lord; **If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,** saith the Lord.
>
> -Jeremiah 31:35-37

This passage alone completely destroys Replacement Theology. God says clearly that as long as the heavenly bodies are around, the nation of Israel will be a distinguishable people-group on earth. And it tells us that unless you can measure the heavens, Israel will never be permanently cast off based upon her spiritual failures. This is the perpetual promise of God, and it relates back the Abrahamic Covenant.

Further, we've noted that God's promises and covenants regarding Israel are unconditional and everlasting (as we just noted concerning the Abrahamic Covenant). The entirety of the prophetic corpus of scripture, all of the direct promises of God throughout the Old Testament, as well as the direct words of the New Testament writers all clearly declare that God's promises to Israel will still be fulfilled. If you take the Bible literally and understand its words in the plain, normal sense, this is an inescapable conclusion. The best place to begin our deeper exploration of this topic is the apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans, in which he unambiguously answers this issue.

In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul begins by laying down a discourse on a number of major doctrines – including the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and glorification. But then he takes a break from the teaching of his doctrine and beginning with Chapter 9, he parenthetically inserts three chapters discussing the condition of the Jews, or national Israel. In these three chapters, Paul helps us understand where and how the nation of Israel fits into the future plans and purpose of God.

In Chapter 9, he deals primarily with Israel's **past** (as God's chosen covenant nation). In Chapter 10, he deals primarily with Israel's **present** (as a nation which has refused to submit to Christ's gospel). And in Chapter 11, he deals primarily with Israel's **future** (as a nation which he says someday will be saved and will enjoy the fulfillment of the New Covenant promises as a nation). As I'm sure you can already see, if Romans 11 really does say what we just claimed, then just based on that chapter alone, the legitimacy of Replacement Theology is completely shattered. Let's begin to investigate this chapter,

In Romans 11, Paul begins by establishing the context of the chapter as being specifically about the Jewish people – the nation of Israel – and what will become of them in the future. The question he was answering was essentially, "if the Gentiles have received the New Covenant promise after the Jews as a nation had rejected it, then what future relevance does Israel still have? Does Israel still have a future in God's program?"

Paul tells us the answer in this chapter, completely obliterating the

false doctrine of Replacement Theology. He begins the chapter by asking the basic question we just asked. He then promptly answers it.

> I say then, **Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
>
> **God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.**
>
> -Romans 11:1-2a

Paul makes it clear that God is *not* finished with the Jewish people – He still has a unique plan for them. Before continuing with Chapter 11, we first need to pause in order to further frame our context. In order to understand the relevance of this question for Paul's first century audience, we need to try to put ourselves in the shoes of those who lived at that time and to try to understand this question they were having regarding the problem of "what is now the purpose of Israel?"

Let's recognize four key facts that will help us understand this issue they were having:

- **Fact #1** – The Israelites are God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Romans 11:28).

- **Fact #2** – God promised His chosen people that they would enjoy a glorious kingdom under their Messiah (Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Jeremiah 23:5-8; 31:31-37; 33:14-16; Luke 1:32-33).

- **Fact #3** – The nation Israel (at least the great majority of the nation, as well as their leadership) rejected their Messiah when He came to earth (John 1:11; Matthew 12:22-24; 21:33-46; 27:22, 23, 25; John 19:15; Acts 22:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15).

- **Fact #4** – When the Church first began it was made up entirely of Jewish believers, but gradually this changed. As

> the years went by, the Church was comprised of more and more Gentiles, and less and less Jews.

Are you beginning to see the problem? To a first century Christian without access to a full New Testament, **Facts #1** and **#2** seem to be contradicted by **Facts #3** and **#4**. What's happened to the promise of the earthly Messianic Kingdom? What's happened to all the unconditional promises that God had given to Israel in the Old Testament that remain unfulfilled? God's program for the present (the Church) involves primarily the Gentiles and not the Jews. Why is this so? Has God cast away His people? Is God through with the nation of Israel? Does the nation have any future in God's program at all?

To the Jewish mind, based on the Old Testament, they always connected the King (or the Messiah) with the earthly kingdom (or the Messianic Kingdom). So then, the question to Paul was also, "if Jesus is the King, then where is the kingdom? And why aren't the Old Testament promises of the Kingdom Age being fulfilled?" God has given us Romans Chapters 9-11 (and especially Chapter 11) to answer these questions.

As we continue, let's also recognize that these same questions we asked also frame the context which Jesus addresses in His Olivet Discourse concerning the future prophetic end-times destiny of Israel, recorded most famously in Matthew 24. But let's continue here with Romans 11.

So, we started out by seeing that in Verses 1 and 2, Paul makes it clear that God is *not* finished with the Jewish people – He still has a unique plan for them as a nation. Dropping down to Verse 7, he then continues:

> What then? **Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for;** but the election hath obtained it, **and the rest were blinded.**
>
> **(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;)** unto this day.
>
> -Romans 11:7-8

Here, Paul refers to Jesus's pronunciation of the curse of blindness upon the unbelieving Jewish people, recorded in Luke 19. Jesus had said:

> If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! **but now they are hid from thine eyes.**
> -Luke 19:42

But Paul tells us in the passage we just read that this curse of blindness was not a novel idea – but rather, "according as it is written". In other words, this had already been prophesied long before, in multiple places in the Old Testament. Paul was essentially quoting the following two prophetic Old Testament passages.

> For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.
> -Isaiah 29:10

> Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.
> -Deuteronomy 29:4

Continuing in his discourse in Romans 11, Paul then goes on to describe how the Gentiles were grafted into the promise of salvation after Israel had rejected it through unbelief. As we continue on with this chapter, there is an important question we must address, as Paul begins to give us understanding on how the Church relates to the spiritual promises God had originally given to Israel. The question is: "is it true that in a sense, the Church is the spiritual version or fulfillment of Israel, in that the Church has received that which the Old Covenant pointed towards?"

The answer is a clear, "absolutely!" scripture is clear that the essence of being a true "son of Abraham" is not achieved just by being a genetic descendant of Abraham, but rather, is achieved through

genuine faith in God. This chapter in Romans discusses this concept of the Church (comprised of mostly Gentiles) being "grafted in" to the spiritual promises given to Israel. This is a somewhat lengthy passage, but necessary to read through in order to understand this concept. Let's pick up with Verse 17.

> And if some of the branches [unbelieving Israel] be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree [the Gentile Church], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree [the spiritual promises of God through Israel];
>
> **Boast not against the branches.** But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.
>
> Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.
>
> Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:
>
> For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.
>
> Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.
>
> **And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.**
>
> **For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?**
>
> -Romans 11:17-24

Paul starts out by telling us that the natural branches (or "unbelieving Israel") have been broken off the tree, and the Gentile Church has been grafted into their spiritual promises of salvation through the New Covenant. This has the effect and purpose of making the Jews "jealous," and so to draw them to faith in Christ, in order that they might again be "grafted back in" to receive their original promised

inheritance. The "natural branches" (or Israel) are still distinct from the "wild branches" (or the Church), so that God's covenants with His people will still be literally fulfilled. And in line with this understanding, let's also keep in mind that **the Church does not receive the unconditional promises made specifically to Israel as a nation** (the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, etc.) – **the Church simply receives the spiritual promises of New Covenant salvation.** Let's not be confused on that key distinction!

But Paul also tells us that our attitude toward Israel should not be hostile. He tells us not to "boast against the branches" – meaning that we should not be antagonistic towards the natural branches, or Israel. He says that if God is able to graft in the Gentile believers, or the wild, unnatural branches, how much more is He able to then, at a later point, graft back in the natural branches?

Continuing on starting with Verse 25, Paul then hits us with some incredible passages, describing this whole subject as a "mystery" – which in Greek, means something previously hidden or not understood, but something God was now using him to reveal. And he then tells us not to be ignorant of this mystery – that this *will* in fact happen! Israel, the natural branches, *will* be grafted back in! He even tells us *when* this will happen – after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." And he tells us that "all Israel will be saved," a deliverance that obviously has not yet taken place. Let's see this as we continue reading in Romans 11:25.

> For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**
>
> **And so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
>
> For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.
>
> **As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.**
>
> **For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.**

-Romans 11:25-29

In this passage, Paul quoted yet another Old Testament prophecy – this one found in Isaiah 59:20-21 – that describes Israel being delivered after their transgression.

> And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.
>
> As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.
>
> -Isaiah 59:20-21

So, Paul is quoting an Old Testament passage that records God's unending commitment to His everlasting, unconditional covenant promises given to Israel. We need to look deeper into Paul's phrase about blindness in part happening to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. But before taking a deeper dive into that, let's first make sure we caught Paul's important statements that we read in Verses 28 and 29. In these key verses, Paul continued to drill home the exact point we've made throughout this study – that God's promises to Israel are immutable.

> As concerning the gospel, they [Israel, or the Jews as a nation] are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.
>
> For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.
>
> -Romans 11:28-29

In his Bible commentary, Adam Clarke summarized Paul's message here in the following way.

> The unbelieving Jews, with regard to the Gospel which they have rejected, are at present enemies to God, and aliens from his kingdom, under his Son Jesus Christ, on account of that extensive grace which has overturned their peculiarity, by admitting the Gentiles into his Church and family: but with regard to the original purpose of election, whereby they were chosen and separated from all the people of the earth to be the peculiar people of God, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; he has still favour in store for them on account of their forefathers the patriarchs.[1]

In Verse 29, Paul said that the gifts and calling of God are **without repentance.** This means that God cannot repent, or change His mind regarding this. It is fixed. In other words, **Israel did not and cannot lose her place in God's plan** despite the fact that they're currently in a state of spiritual blindness. He's telling us that **God does have a future plan for Israel** – perfectly in alignment with and fulfillment of the numerous Old Testament prophecies he keeps quoting! He's telling us that their national blindness is **temporary,** and when it's removed, **they will be saved as a nation!** God's election of Israel as His chosen nation is immutable – and He will get her back.

Like we said, Paul even tells us *when* their blindness will end. The answer is found in the unique phrase, "the fulness of the Gentiles" in Verse 25 – ("blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles** be come in"). Remember, Paul declared that this was a hidden mystery that he was now revealing. This mystery is a foundational key to being able to recognize the distinction between Israel and the Church – since the Church was an unknown entity in Old Testament prophecy (the Church being another mystery God used Paul to reveal, elsewhere in his writings).

The key word in this verse is "until" ("*until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"). It's an interesting study to track down all of the "untils" in the Bible. You will find that many of them are keys or markers of some kind. In other words, they act as boundary conditions that say, "this won't happen until that." These boundary conditions help us sharply isolate and define certain events, groups, times, and

subjects in scripture. If you look closely here, you see that the term "fulness of the Gentiles" is a strategic label for the end of the Church Age, and it's juxtaposed with the removal of the blindness from Israel. So, as a nation, Israel will receive spiritual sight after the Church Age is complete.

But let's backtrack for a moment and understand more background on why Jesus pronounced corporate blindness upon the Jewish nation. The answer is given to us two verses after Jesus's declaration of blindness in Luke 19:42, which we read earlier – **"because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."** In other words, they didn't receive their Messiah when He came. They rejected Him at His coming. But let's take a moment to set the stage in order to fully recognize what was happening here.

The setting of this was the city of Jerusalem in the year 33 AD. It was the week that would end with Jesus's crucifixion. Jesus was approaching the city while being showered with a chorus of "hosannas" from the frenzied Jewish onlookers (a Messianic exclamation meaning, "save now"). They threw palm branches down before Him as He approached riding a donkey. They sang the prophetic Messianic song from Psalm 118, which anticipated the Messianic King entering Jerusalem. This was the fulfillment of a very special day!

What day exactly? The day prophesied of in Daniel 9:25 – the culminating day of Daniel's sixty-nine week "countdown to the Messiah," the prophecy given by the angel Gabriel to Daniel half a millennium earlier. This was "the day" also spoken of in Psalm 118:24-26 ("this is the day which the Lord hath made…") and anticipated in detail in Zechariah 9:9 ("thy King cometh unto thee…").

This culminating day – known to Christians today as the Triumphal Entry – was supposed to be a day of great joy, and so far, it had been. But something was about to change. Jesus Christ, as He was being hailed as a Messianic King entering Jerusalem on that day, suddenly began to weep. Let's read Luke's recording of this event.

> And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
>
> Saying, **If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day,**

the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**

-Luke 19:41-44

So, we see the answer to our question of why Jesus pronounced corporate blindness upon Israel – because they knew not the time of their Messianic visitation. And Jesus wept over this. He had offered them the promises of the Messianic Kingdom (which had been promised in prophetic detail throughout the Old Testament), but they would not receive Him as their King Messiah. All of their scriptures and prophets were given to lead them to the acceptance of Him as Messiah, but as a nation, they blew it. He wept because they blew it, despite the fact that He had gone to such lengths ahead of time to prepare them ahead to receive Him. Although many were hailing Him on this day, Jesus knew that just a few days later, these same onlookers would be part of the mob shouting "crucify Him!" The leadership of the nation had already turned on Jesus, going as far as to attribute His miracles to Satan – and the populace would soon follow.

Because of that, Jesus (speaking to the unbelieving nation of Israel) said, "the things which belong unto thy peace" are hidden from you. He announced corporate blindness upon the Jewish nation specifically because they did not truly recognize this day, and because they rejected their prophesied Messiah! In other words, as a nation, because of this rejection, God's program for Israel's kingdom would go into postponement and He would instead introduce His interim program called the Church. But this postponement would be temporary – not permanent (as Paul tells us). God's seventy-week prophetic time-clock for Israel (described in Daniel 9:24-27) was paused on this

day in 33 AD as the sixty-ninth week was completed and the Church's time-clock would soon start on the Day of Pentecost.

Going back to Paul's discourse in Romans 11, we now can fully understand what he meant by "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." The fulness of the Gentiles refers to the Gentiles that are gathered in to make up this interim program called the Church – and blindness in part will continue among Israel as a nation until the end of this intervening Church Age period that began on Pentecost.

The Church Age ends with the physical removal of the Church from the earth at the event we call the Rapture – the supernatural catching away of the Church to heaven. The point is, that God will not begin primarily working through Israel as a nation again until the Church is removed – until the "fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Everything taking place right now regarding Israel being in the land, etc., is preparatory for this final week. Following the "fullness of the Gentiles" (or the completion of the Church Age program on earth, which terminates with the Rapture) God's program for Israel will again commence and their time-clock will resume, as their seventieth week (or the Tribulation) begins.

When this final seventieth week has expired, the six-fold purpose of the seventieth week program (detailed in Daniel 9:24) will be completed and the Millennial Kingdom will be inaugurated. God's plans for Israel will continue into this Kingdom Age, in which He will fulfill all of His remaining kingdom promises to Israel. Israel will be the centerpiece nation on earth during this period.

So, the Old Testament promises and unconditional covenants will still be fulfilled for Israel, but are currently in a state of postponement due to their unbelief and rejection of Him as their Messiah. This is an important point: **postponement does not mean cancellation.** Like we mentioned, God's program for Israel will restart in the Tribulation after the Church has been removed. Because of their unbelief, national Israel will be thrust into the discipline of the Tribulation, ultimately using this time of unparalleled distress to draw a righteous remnant of Israel to repentance.

The details of this deliverance for national Israel are prophesied of

in many places throughout the Bible, such as Zechariah Chapters 8-14, which speaks of end-times Israel at Christ's return. A key verse describing the future remnant of Israel coming to faith is Zechariah 12:10.

> And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.
>
> -Zechariah 12:10

This occurs at the end of the seventieth week, or Tribulation period prophesied of in Daniel 9:24-27 (which we will fully detail later on). Understanding this is foundational as to why a literal reading of the Bible will always force one to the conclusion that the Church has not replaced Israel. This is just a small sampling of scripture that clearly tells us that Israel has a future in God's plan! We have examined numerous passages throughout this study that all indicate this; and we will continue to examine many more later on as well.

With this deep dive now completed, let's again refocus our attention back to Romans 11. Before moving on, let's do one final review of this key passage (Verses 25-29), while keeping in mind the prophetic understandings we just discussed.

Verse 25:

> For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery,** lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

In other words, Israel rejected her Messiah and her kingdom program was placed into a period of postponement until God's interim program – the Church Age – is ended at the Rapture.

Verse 26:

And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

In other words, after the Church Age is complete, God will again begin to deal primarily with Israel. He will use the Tribulation to purge the unbelief from Israel and draw them to repentance. He will then return at the end of the Tribulation to save the righteous remnant that turns and cries out to Him.

Verse 27:

For **this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.**

In other words, God will then bring the righteous remnant of Israel into the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom, in which they'll be spiritually and physically restored and all of God's promises will be fulfilled – exactly as we're told throughout the scriptures.

Verse 28:

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: **but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.**

In other words, while in their current state of spiritual unbelief, the Jews are hostile towards the idea of Jesus being their Messiah, making them God's enemies for the time. But this has worked together to bless the Gentiles, as our privileges of receiving New Covenant salvation were made available to us after Israel rejected this gift. But their state of unbelief does not revoke God's love, His promises, and His covenants concerning Israel. He will fulfill all that He promised to their forefathers.

Verse 29:

For **the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.**

In other words, God cannot and will not go back on His promises to Israel. Israel is still a chosen and distinct entity that God will deal with separately. Israel as a nation still has a purpose and a destiny in God's playbook.

So, after studying all that the Bible communicates about this, we hope you recognize that you can't "get rid" of Israel (as Replacement Theologians attempt to do), and at the same time think you're taking God's Word seriously. If Paul tells us that Israel is still beloved in God's eyes and still has a future in God's plan, then we should also embrace a love for Israel in spite of her unbelief. The mentality of the Christian towards Israel is similar to that of a parent watching a rebellious child reap the consequences of their bad decisions. The parent loves and pities the child, and roots for the child to get it right the next time, despite their stumbles. That should be our attitude towards Israel. Israel got it wrong at the Messiah's First Coming, and has been suffering the consequences ever since. But scripture tells us that she will get it right the second time, at the Messiah's Second Coming. It should be a joyful idea to us to know that Israel will finally come to faith. If we know that this is the heart of God, then it should give us joy to see His plan come to pass.

Of course, that doesn't mean we have to support everything Israel does, or everything any particular Jewish person might do. As a nation in sin and in open rebellion against God, we in fact should expect the same sinful activity to be in Israel that we also witness in other nations. And of course, we should always do our best to spread the gospel to them. But we need to embrace a mentality that aligns with God's thinking concerning Israel as a nation – He yearns to graft them back into His spiritual promises, and He will!

As we will see further ahead, the anti-Semitic mentality that arises out of a belief in Replacement Theology is completely opposite of the mentality Paul expresses in Romans. In light of this, we can conclude

that embracing this belief actually puts one at odds with God and with His future plans.

Church Age Believers as "Children of Abraham"

Before going on in our examination of the consequences of Replacement Theology, let's continue addressing our earlier point in which we were discussing how clear scripture is, that the essence of being a true child of Abraham is not achieved just by being a literal descendant of Abraham. Instead, more importantly, it is achieved through genuine faith in God.

> Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith,** the same are **the children of Abraham.**
>
> -Galatians 3:7

Paul tells us here that in the context of the Church, those who through faith believe in Christ are the "children of Abraham." He notes something similar in the following passage as well.

> Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For **they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:**
>
> **Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:** but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.
>
> That is, **They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God:** but **the children of the promise are counted for the seed.**
>
> -Romans 9:6-8

Here, Paul makes it clear that being a physical descendant of Abraham does not make one a child of God, but rather, the "children of the promise," or those who have actually received and obeyed the promises of God are considered the seed of Abraham. We find this again in Galatians.

And if ye be Christs, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

-Galatians 3:29

So, Paul tells us that the Church is the true fulfillment of what it means to be heirs of the promises of God. This true fulfillment is an inward working of the Spirit, rather than an outward, or a genetic thing.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

But **he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;** and circumcision is that **of the heart, in the spirit,** and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

-Romans 2:28-29

Again, Paul tells us that the true essence of what it means to be a child of the promises of Abraham is inward, not genetic. This does not mean we as Church Age believers "become Israel" or that Israel is no longer a national identity with a future in God's plan. It simply means exactly what we've been saying thus far – that those who have come to faith in Christ have fulfilled what Israel was instituted to receive – the spiritual blessings of God.

For **we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus,** and have no confidence in the flesh.

-Philippians 3:3

Again, Paul tells us that we – the Church – are the true fulfillment of what the circumcision was instituted to represent, or point towards. He makes it even clearer in the following passage.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

> That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
>
> But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
>
> …
>
> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
>
> -Ephesians 2:11-13, 19

So, the children of promise are those who put their faith in Jesus, and they are seen by God as the true seed and heirs of Abraham. Whether they are Jewish or Gentile, God regards only those who have renewed hearts as being citizens in the household of God.

So, New Testament Christians are called the "seed of Abraham" because he was the father of those who believe – the father of faith. Abraham was, in a unique way, both Jew and Gentile. He was a Gentile because there were no Jews at that time. Yet, the Jews are his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. In the same way, Abraham is both the father of physical Israel, known as the Jews, and father of spiritual descendants, that is, everyone who believes in Jesus as Messiah, whether of Jewish or Gentile blood.

This makes perfect sense based upon our exploration of the Old Covenant as being an earthly symbol pointing towards the greater spiritual reality of the New Covenant. If Israel is a type of the Church, which we positively demonstrated earlier in our study, then it follows that New Covenant believers are the ultimate spiritual reality of what being an Israelite was intended to point towards. This is clearly and obviously Biblical.

But what is not Biblical is to say that the Church is Israel in the sense that national Israel is no longer a unique entity in God's plan, and no longer has a purpose or future. It's also not Biblical to say that God won't fulfill His covenant promises to Israel, and will instead somehow apply their fulfillments to the Church. That is the erroneous view of Replacement Theology.

The idea that God is finished with Israel turns out to be a particularly dangerous belief, as in reality, it impugns the character of God. In other words, God has made unconditional eternal promises to Israel, which were never – and can never be – annulled. To assert otherwise is to essentially call God a liar. It also introduces questions and uncertainty regarding every other promise God has made – including His promises to us. But God is not a liar, and His promises are always faithful and true. As we've seen in Romans 11, Paul continually addressed this issue of God fulfilling His promises to national Israel, and argued this exact point in his epistles.

Earlier, in Romans 3, he wrote concerning the similar question many Hebrew Christians had at that time – the question of "if the Gentiles are now grafted into the promises of God, what good are God's promises to Abraham? What good was God's choice of the nation Israel?" We will see that Paul replies (in Verse 2) essentially saying, "Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the Word of God."

That leads to a second question many had (in Verse 3) which essentially was: "Does Jewish unbelief negate God's promises?" In Verse 4, Paul responds strongly to the thought that God might be unfaithful, essentially saying: "May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." In other words, he agrees with us that Replacement Theology makes God out to be a liar! Let's read through this passage.

> What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?
>
> Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.
>
> For **what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?**
>
> **God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;**
>
> -Romans 3:1-4

So, Paul explains that Israel's unbelief could not nullify God's

unconditional promises given to them. This passage makes it clear that the notion that God could be unfaithful to His clear promises made to Israel (which Replacement theologians advocate) – is to call God a liar. In the next subsection, we will begin to explore the outcomes that have arisen throughout history due to the belief in Replacement Theology.

The Historical Consequences of Replacement Theology

If the Bible is so clear on the distinction between Israel and the Church (as we've witnessed in the previous subsection), then when, how, and why did certain elements within so-called Christianity develop the belief of Replacement Theology? As we mentioned earlier, it is a documented fact of history that beliefs such as Replacement Theology developed as an *outgrowth* of anti-Semitism in the early so-called Church. It also can be said in the reverse – embracing a belief in Replacement Theology often *leads* to anti-Semitism.

Note: For the remainder of this chapter, we do not need to continue using the designation "so-called," as you surely can recognize that we don't consider what became the mainstream "Church" in the first several centuries (nor its denominational offshoots) to have any similarity to the actual Church the Bible depicts in Acts and the Epistles.

In order to recognize the origin of the mainstream Church's acceptance of Replacement Theology, we must go all the way back to the early centuries of Christian history. Early on in Church history, there developed two centers of Biblical interpretation (or in other words, two different hermeneutical approaches to understanding the Bible): the **Antiochian** school of thought and the **Alexandrian** school of thought.[2]

The Antiochian school (centered in Antioch near the modern border of Syria and Turkey) interpreted Bible prophecy **literally.** On the other hand, the Alexandrian school located in Alexandria, Egypt developed an **allegorical** interpretation of prophecy. By the fourth

century, the Alexandrian school had gained preeminence as the dominant school of thought in mainstream Christendom – largely due to the writings of Augustine (354-430 AD). His book *The City of God* gave the Alexandrian allegorical school of thought a formal treatise. Augustine's views were accepted by the Catholic Church, leading to the widespread dominance of allegorism over the next thousand years of Church history.[3] [4]

In this book, he portrayed the events of his time within a framework that we refer to as "Amillennialism." Within Amillennialism, the clear scriptural prophecies and promises given to Israel regarding a literal and physical future earthly Kingdom reign of the Messiah are "spiritualized" away and interpreted as the present "reign of Christ" within the hearts of the Christians. In other words, through the allegorizing of scripture, Amillennialism denies a future thousand-year Millennial Kingdom, which scripture repeatedly promises. Through this system of interpretation, the allegorist becomes the ultimate decider of what the Bible says – not the text.[5]

These views of allegorism, Amillennialism, and Replacement Theology go hand in hand. The scholars who introduced these aberrant views were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy, such as Gnosticism, which taught that the physical world was evil and only the spiritual was capable of good. On this basis, Gnosticism denied the physical Incarnation of Christ. It was a short slide to then conclude that the perfect Son of God could not rule a physical earthly Kingdom (despite the promises of scripture). In this view, His reign must instead be over the immaterial hearts and souls of mankind. Everything the Bible plainly says about future prophecy was interpreted through this "spiritual" lens. The city of Alexandria at the time was the hotbed of Gnosticism and Greek philosophy, and so it is easy to see how these false beliefs worked their way into the Church.[6]

Although on the surface it might seem to be an insignificant change, Amillennialism profoundly changed the Church in the centuries after Augustine. It altered the Church's view of scripture, as well as of prophecy, and the negative impact of Augustine's doctrine continues to this day. Let's briefly try to backtrack in time in order to

understand the evolution of allegorism and how it led to the Catholic Church system that pursued temporal earthly power and set the stage for the rampant anti-Semitism that was active throughout Church history.

After centuries of persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire, a monumental turning point within Christian history occurred in 313 AD. During this year, the Roman emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, making Christianity an approved religion in the Roman Empire.[7] This edict led to Christianity eventually becoming the official state religion under the reign of Theodosius I, prompting the forced so-called "conversion" of pagans.[8]

The Roman government's sudden approval of, and involvement in the Christian faith dramatically changed the course of Church history. From a theological perspective – and specifically an eschatological perspective – the Edict of Milan and the edicts that followed signaled a monumental paradigm shift from the well-grounded literal interpretation (Premillennialism, at that time called Chiliasm) of the ancient Church fathers, to the views of Amillennialism and Postmillennialism that would dominate Christian thinking from the fourth century AD to at least the middle part of the nineteenth century. Premillennialism of course, is the expectation of a future literal thousand-year kingdom (or Millennium) on earth in which Christ reigns on David's throne – just as the Bible speaks of.

Like we mentioned already, this shift away from the early Premillennialism of the apostolic Church gained strength with Augustine and his allegorical approach to Biblical prophecy, as popularized in *The City of God*. Grant Jeffrey described the transformation of the Church after the time of Augustine as follows.

> Consequently, as the Church formed powerful alliances with the kings of Europe, it lost interest in the literal prophecies about Christ's coming Kingdom … and leaders of the medieval Church set out to change humanity and to rule the world themselves and in alliance with Christian rulers.[9]

So, as the Church took upon itself the role of introducing and expanding God's so-called kingdom on earth, it sought to exert its power through human government. It began to rely on military might to conquer and forcibly "convert" people to Christianity (much like Islam), rather than on the presentation of the Gospel. It was not coincidental that all these factors led to the atrocities of the Medieval Period, and the continual persecution of the Jews as heretics and infidels who must be converted or destroyed. The edicts of the Roman emperors mandating Christianity, combined with the emergence of Amillennialism, contributed greatly to this distortion of the entire purpose and mission of the Church. It was these distortions that characterized the Catholic Church and its dominance over the majority of Christian history. Like we mentioned, these distorted views also provided the perfect breeding ground for anti-Semitism, as these doctrines provided a way to delete Israel from the future program of God.

In his book *Israel and the Church: The Prodigal Heirs*, Chuck Missler documents a sampling of the history and writings of some of the early Church fathers, even prior to the Edict of Milan and Augustine. The Church fathers unfortunately, espoused tremendously negative views towards Judaism. It's astonishing to discover the blatant anti-Semitism in the early Church.[10]

Missler points out that even very early on, this hatred of the Jews was present. For example, even the early "Church father" Ignatius (50-117 AD) taught that those who partake of the Passover are partakers with those who killed Jesus.[11]

As we go through these examples, you will note this skewed mentality to be a common pattern of thought, in which there exists this continual theme of "the Jews killed Jesus." This mistaken mentality completely misses the point of everything Jesus did. First, it was always in God's plan and foreknowledge to die for us. Revelation 13:8 calls Christ the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" – indicating that it was always in His plan to perform the redemptive work of the cross. Secondly, the reality is that it wasn't "the Jews" that killed Jesus, but rather the sins of humanity – of all of us – that made

the cross necessary. Because of His love for us, Jesus voluntarily went to the cross, looking past all of the hurt and pain it included, because He saw into the future. He saw the joy set before Him of having a bride – a people, called the Church – holy, set apart, and filled with His Spirit. A group who would make the free-will choice to follow Him out of love, despite the earthly consequences.

> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who **for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,** despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
>
> -Hebrews 12:2

In this passage, the phrase "despising the shame" means He thought little of it, or disregarded it. He was the God of the universe being put through the most painfully excruciating and embarrassing death possible – but He looked past it to see us as His joyful reward – and He just ignored the pain and shame.[12]

So, we can see how misplaced it is to "hate the Jews" for "killing Jesus." This is to completely miss the point of Christianity, the New Covenant, and the Bible. It's to make Jesus some sort of victim. It's to imply that Jesus didn't fulfill His mission, which they evidently must believe to have been His human survival. According to that view, maybe Jesus's true mission was to reach His golden years and enjoy His grandkids. Obviously not. Jesus's mission was always to come to Earth and die for the sins of His beloved image creature – mankind.

But getting back to our exploration of Church history, let's point out a number of other recognizable early Church figures who promoted similar beliefs…

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) claimed that God's covenants with Israel were no longer valid. He argued that the Gentiles had replaced the Jews.[13] Irenaeus (130-202 AD) believed that the Jews were disinherited from the grace of God.[14] Tertullian (155-240 AD) also blamed the Jews for Jesus's death and argued that they had been rejected by God.[15] Origen (263-339 AD) also asserted that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus.[16] Eusebius (263-339 AD) taught that the

promises of scripture were meant for the Gentiles and the curses were meant for the Jews.[17]

So, we can see that there was a long and unfortunate history of these mistaken beliefs that the Church is the true Israel, the Jews were to be hated for their role in killing Jesus, the Jews were no longer the chosen people of God, and that they no longer had any place in God's plan. As we mentioned earlier, these beliefs were greatly embraced and mainstreamed by the Catholic Church, as we will see in the next several points.

Emperor Constantine (who had issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD) created a law on October 18, 329 AD making it illegal to convert to Judaism. Half a century later, laws issued by emperors Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I declared things like:

> Those Christians who have insulted the dignity of their own religion and name and have contaminated themselves with the Jewish disease will be punished for these shameful acts.[18]

Fueled by his hatred of the Jews, Constantine himself said:

> Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.[19]

The Synod of Elvira in the early fourth century AD prohibited Christians from sharing a meal with a Jew, marrying a Jew, or blessing a Jew.[20] The Council of Nicea in 325 AD changed the date of the celebration of the Resurrection in order to purposely distance the Church from the Jewish calendar. Christ rose the first Sunday after Passover – which is the Jewish Feast of First Fruits, which would be the accurate time to commemorate His resurrection. But this council made sure the observation of Easter was well removed from this date.[21] Concerning this, the theologian and Church historian Theodoret records a letter that Constantine wrote to the bishops who couldn't attend the Council of Nicea, saying:

> It was … declared improper to follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival, because their hands are imbued in crime, and their minds blinded with defilement.[22]

The Church under Constantine excommunicated any Quartodecimans – who were men who wanted to memorialize the crucifixion according to the correct calendar day (in connection to the 14th of Nisan, the date of Passover on the Jewish calendar). The Archbishop of Constantinople John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) condemned this supposed association with the Jews, saying:

> But you dishonor him so much that you pay honor to those who slew him on the cross, that you observe with them the fellowship of the festivals, that you go to their profane places, enter their unclean doors, and share in the tables of demons. For I am persuaded to call the fasting of the Jews a table of demons because they slew God.[23]

Augustine (who we've already discussed at length), asserted that the Jews deserved death, but were destined to wander the earth to witness the Church's victory over the synagogue.[24] This mentality of Augustine – and many before him – was completely embraced by the Roman Catholic Church, as it consolidated temporal power as the mainstream Church – believing it was their job to physically establish God's kingdom on earth through military conquest and forcible suppression of theological opposition. Of course, the greatest of all villains in their minds, were the Jews who had "killed Jesus."

It was this anti-Semitic and completely unbiblical mentality that lead to the atrocities of the Middle Ages and following, as the Church embraced a view of allegorical eschatology rather than literalism. All of the unconditional promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament (most of which will be fulfilled in the Millennium), were denied by the Roman Church, which instead advocated the beliefs of Replacement Theology.

But let's try to understand how the prevalent anti-Semitism melded with the state-run religious system to produce this deviant

view of eschatology and the future of Israel. As Rome took over the Church, it became no longer acceptable to preach that Jesus would one day return to rid the world of its evil rulers. The current "evil rulers" of that era controlled the Church leaders as part of its state-run religion, presenting an obvious conflict of interest for the Church. This is one reason for the rising prominence of Augustine's allegorical, Amillennial view that Christ's rule would only be symbolic – taking place in our hearts. And it was compatible with the Roman Church's quest for earthly power, as they assumed the role of establishing God's kingdom themselves – since under their view, they were not expecting Christ to actually return and do it Himself. It also allowed them to remove the Jews (whom they hated) from God's plans.[25]

But by embracing these views, they denied basically everything the Bible says about God's prophetic plans for the future, concerning essentially everything – Israel, the Church, the Kingdom, the earth, and even the Eternal State. In this way, they distorted the message of the Word of God, which directly led to the atrocities and murders committed as a downstream result of this flawed method of interpretation. But further yet, they challenged the character and integrity of God Himself by the implication that He will not fulfill His Word by keeping His unconditional promises.

Before moving on to explore some of the historical downstream consequences of these false doctrines, let's take a moment to dispel the erroneous belief called Amillennialism – the denial of a future physical Messianic Kingdom on earth.

In order for God to keep His promises to Israel and His covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:8-16; 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4), there must be a literal, physical kingdom on this earth. This Millennial Age is clearly spoken of throughout the prophetic corpus of scripture. As mentioned throughout this study, to doubt this is to call into question God's desire and/or ability to keep His promises – opening up a host of other theological problems. For example, if God could renege on His unconditional promises to Israel after proclaiming those promises to be "everlasting," how could we be sure of anything He promises, including His promises of salvation given to believers in Jesus? The

only solution is to take Him at His word and understand that His promises will be literally fulfilled – just as all prophesies have been historically throughout scripture.

The Bible clearly says that the kingdom will be a literal, physical, earthly kingdom. The following are just six of the many reasons that we can point to in order to establish this view.

1. Christ's feet will literally, actually, physically touch the Mount of Olives prior to the establishment of His Kingdom (Zechariah 14:4, 9). We are told that the wicked people of earth will physically see Him coming, and will mourn (Revelation 1:7). Christ's return is literal, contrary to the beliefs of the Amillennialists.
2. During the Kingdom, the Messiah Himself will personally dwell on earth and execute justice and judgment on the earth (Jeremiah 23:5-8; Revelation 21:3; et al.). This describes a physical Kingdom on earth ruled by Christ who dwells among man throughout this period.
3. The Kingdom is described as being *under heaven* (Daniel 7:13-14, 27). In other words, a physical Kingdom on earth – not some sort of allegorized heavenly reign in men's hearts.
4. The prophets foretold of dramatic earth-changes during the Kingdom Age (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 11:6-9; 29:18; 35:1-2; 65:20-22; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Amos 9:11-15). This describes a physical Kingdom on earth.
5. The chronological order of events in Revelation indicates the existence of an earthly Kingdom prior to the conclusion of world history and the beginning of the Eternal State (Revelation 20).
6. The literal duration of the Kingdom Age is told to us in scripture. Revelation 19 describes the return of Jesus Christ, coming in glory and power to take over the kingdoms of this world and to institute a new, just reign here on earth. He will put down rebellion, remove the last wicked human empire ruling on earth and institute the reign of the

> government of God. In Revelation 20:1-7, we are told six times that the kingdom will last one thousand years. This is then repeated three more times in Revelation 21:4-6. We have no reason to believe that one thousand years means anything other than one thousand years. So, it is clear that the duration of the Kingdom will be for a literal Millennium.

The Amillennial view comes from using one method of interpretation for unfulfilled prophecy and another method for non-prophetic scripture and fulfilled prophecy. Non-prophetic scripture and fulfilled prophecy are interpreted literally or normally. But, according to the Amillennialist, unfulfilled prophecy is to be interpreted spiritually, or non-literally. Those who hold to Amillennialism believe that a "spiritual" reading of unfulfilled prophecy is the normal reading of the texts. This is called a dual hermeneutic (hermeneutics meaning the study of the principles of Biblical interpretation). In other words, it's an inconsistent method of interpretation. The Amillennialist assumes that most of, or all unfulfilled prophecy is written in symbolic, figurative, spiritual language. Therefore, the Amillennialist will assign different meanings to those parts of scripture instead of the normal, contextual meanings of those words.

One of the main problems with interpreting unfulfilled prophecy in this manner is that this allows for a wide range of meanings, and allows you to concoct your own private interpretation. It doesn't hold you accountable to the actual text. But God, the ultimate Author of all scripture, did have a specific meaning in mind when He inspired the human authors to write. By allegorizing it, you're ignoring and changing what He intended to convey to us. You're putting your own interpretation above the intended meaning of scripture.

Like we've mentioned already, the fact that fulfilled prophecies were always fulfilled literally in the Bible is the best reason of all for assuming that yet-unfulfilled prophecies will also be fulfilled literally in the future. For example, the prophecies concerning Christ's First Coming were all fulfilled literally. Therefore, prophecies concerning

Christ's Second Coming should also be expected to be fulfilled literally.

For these reasons, an allegorical interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be rejected and a literal/grammatical/historical, or normal and plain interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be adopted. Dr. David L. Cooper described this literal method of interpretation as follows.

> When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.[26]

Some opponents of the future, literal fulfillment of prophecy attempt to argue against it by noting that prophecy often employs the use of symbols and figures of speech. This is faulty logic. Obviously, prophecy can sometimes involve the use of strategic symbolism, but that doesn't mean that the prophecy won't be fulfilled literally in history. Literal interpreters have always recognized the Biblical use of symbols and figures of speech. Dr. Charles Ryrie explains this clearly.

> Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.[27]

For example, early in Christ's ministry, John the Baptist said of Jesus as He approached him: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John used a symbol – the "Lamb" – to designate Jesus as the Lamb of God because it was prophetically descriptive of Him in some incredible ways. Yet, just because a symbol was used, it does not mean that Jesus did not liter-

ally die as a sacrificial Lamb for man's sin. Rather, John's use of a symbolic reference to Christ complimented the point that Jesus came to "take away the sin of the world" through His actual, sacrificial death. This prediction was fulfilled literally in history.

In a similar way, the Bible uses the term "beast" throughout Daniel and Revelation as a symbol for the character that is often called the Antichrist. Because the term "beast" is used – which is symbolic, opponents of literalism may advocate that it simply represents the "personification of evil in the world" instead of being a real individual. This is not the case, as scripture makes very clear. Rather, the symbol of a beast was apparently chosen by God to designate the beastly and voracious nature of the Antichrist. This does not mean that the beast won't be a literal person. Although a symbol is used to describe this still-future being, it simply means that the Antichrist will display ungodly character traits as a real historical person. This prophecy will be fulfilled literally, just as Christ's death as the Lamb of God.

We should not be surprised to find that the Bible uses rhetorical devices to get its points across to a wide audience in a way they can identify with and relate to. God plainly tells us as much in Hosea 12:10.

> I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used **similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.**
>
> -Hosea 12:10

Similitude: a likening or comparison in the form of a simile, parable, or allegory.[28]

It may be that symbols and figures of speech are used in giving those prophecies, but just as they did not affect their literal fulfillments in the past, neither will they prevent literal fulfillments in the future. Sir Robert Anderson has said it well.

> There is not a single prophecy, of which the fulfillment is recorded in scripture, that was not realized with absolute accuracy, and in every

> detail; and it is wholly unjustifiable to assume that a new system of fulfillment was inaugurated after the sacred canon closed…Literalness of fulfillment may therefore be accepted as an axiom to guide us in the study of prophecy.[29]

If anything, symbolism and figures of speech are meant to convey meaning to us regarding these literal people and events. Prophecy about the future will be fulfilled literally, just as prophecy has in the past. Biblical prophecy should always be interpreted literally and a literal fulfillment should always be expected.

So, we should take the text seriously by allowing it to interpret itself through the plain use of language. Amillennialism fails in that it uses faulty and inconsistent hermeneutics – failing to take the plain meanings, and interpreting unfulfilled prophecy differently from fulfilled prophecy.

We should recognize that the early Christian view (in line with the eschatological views of ancient Jews) was always Premillennialism. These early Christians believed (as the Jews did) in a future literal Millennium, or Messianic Kingdom. The writings of the second century Christian apologist Justin Martyr attest to this.

> **I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured** that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and **a thousand years in Jerusalem**, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.[30]

Justin, who was born around 100 AD, records that the orthodox view at his time was that which we today would call Premillennialism. Although Justin himself got caught up in the deception that the Church replaces Israel, he does record the fact that at his time, the common view of eschatology had not yet been poisoned by it. But like we said, as time passed, the allegorism/Amillennialism of Augustine was embraced by the mainstream and became a systematic interpretive method that supported the anti-Semitic views of Replacement Theology.

And so, we see in summary that the allegorical view of the scriptures is a form of anti-Semitism in which Church leaders have tried to rip the promises of God away from Israel. We've seen that early Christian leaders have a long history of advocating that the "Jews killed Jesus," and that "the Church has replaced Israel," etc. We have already seen some of the results of this in some of the anti-Semitic edicts of the Church councils that we've looked at. And throughout the Medieval era, the Jews were viewed as a cursed race, becoming fodder for robbery, murder, abuse, and every kind of hatred and humiliation.

But let's recognize a few of the specific historical consequences of Replacement Theology. The Roman Popes were at the center of this worldview, as a result of the Amillennial worldview. The following were some of the unfortunate outcomes.

On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV issued the papal bull (a public decree) "Exegit Sincere Devotionis Affectus" at the request of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, granting them the right to establish an organized judicial interrogation system to root out Jews suspected of remaining faithful to Judaism (which was outlawed). Many Jews were burned at the stake by order of what became known as the Spanish Inquisition.[31]

In 1492, King Ferdinand decided that all Spanish Jews should be banned from Spain. Approximately 150,000 Jews were forced to leave Spain.[32] Similar persecutions, pogroms, evictions, and abuses were leveled at the Jewish communities throughout Europe and the Middle East throughout Christian history. This example of the Spanish Inquisition is just one of a seemingly endless list – most of which were committed by so-called Christians and the so-called Church, all under the banner of Christ. If you doubt this, do a simple online search of the history of anti-Semitism. You will be amazed at the abuse and persecution the Jews have had to put up with throughout Christian history. In fact, the way so-called Christians have treated Israel throughout history makes the Muslim treatment of Israel look friendly.[33]

With this in mind, it's easy to understand the Jews' animosity towards Christianity after dealing with this kind of treatment for two

thousand years. But this treatment was not limited to the Roman Catholic Church.

An unfortunate reality is that while much good was done during the Protestant Reformation to attempt to reform the Church back to its Biblical roots, the Reformers failed in many key areas. Relevant to our study here, is their failure to re-examine the long-held allegorical method of interpretation and Amillennial eschatology, which went hand-in-hand with Replacement Theology. The main leaders of the Protestant Reformation – men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin – while doing much good, were also, unfortunately, some of the most vehement anti-Semites in history.

In 1543, Luther published *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he revealed his deep anti-Semitism.

- He said that the Jews are a "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth."[34]

- He said they are full of the "devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine."[35]

- He said the synagogue was a "defiled bride, yes, an incorrigible whore and an evil slut..."[36]

- He argued that their synagogues and schools be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated.[37]

- He said they should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, and these "poisonous envenomed worms" should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time.[38]

- He also seemed to advocate their murder, writing "[we] are at fault in not slaying them."[39]

According to the acclaimed Reformation scholar and theologian Heiko Oberman:

> The basis of Luther's anti-Judaism was the conviction that ever since Christ's appearance on earth, the Jews have had no more future as Jews.[40]

In other words, from this quote, we can clearly see how the root of Luther's anti-Semitism was Replacement Theology – the view that Israel no longer has a future in God's plan. Unfortunately, this did not end in the centuries surrounding the Middle Ages and the Reformation. Instead, it set the foundation for the later anti-Semitism that fueled the Nazi persecutions of the Jews in the 1900s.

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William L. Shirer wrote:

> It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews. Luther's advice was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler.[41]

So, it was the failure of the Reformers such as Martin Luther to re-examine the eschatology of the Medieval Church that lead to the silent pulpits in Nazi-era Germany and the atrocities of the Holocaust that followed. Chuck Missler summarized it well.

> When we replace Israel with the Church and reject Christ's literal millennial reign, we can trace a path from Augustine to Auschwitz. Replacement Theology specifically denies Israel's role in God's program, directly contradicting a long list of scriptures that God has laid out in both the Old and New Testaments.[42]

So, we should recognize that there are real-life downstream consequences of the belief in Replacement Theology and the failure to recognize the distinction between Israel and the Church.

As we have seen, it is impossible for one to read the Bible literally and plainly, and still come to the conclusion that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan. If you come to this conclusion, it is only through embracing a flawed system of Bible interpretation in which you allegorize away the plain and obvious meanings of what the Bible says. You end up inserting and exalting your own personal interpretations instead of allowing the text to speak for itself.

The outworkings of this kind of skewed system of interpretation are deeply flawed views such as Replacement Theology, which often end in anti-Semitism, which places oneself contrary to the mind of God and makes it impossible to accurately understand the Bible. It blocks your ability to accurately understand your purpose as a Christian, since it blocks your ability to understand the purpose of the Church as a whole. It is why we can firmly state that Replacement Theology is a dangerous error that's based on an inaccurate understanding of the Bible. That should be obvious, as it is in direct contradiction to everything we have learned from the scriptures earlier in this study.

So, since we have firmly asserted that Israel does have a future in God's plan, then what is it? Although we have already briefly mentioned it throughout this study, we will now transition our focus into a deeper study of this topic.

In the next chapter, we will indulge in an exploration of the prophetic future of the nation of Israel, according to God's timeline as laid out in scripture. We will find that without the foundational axiom of understanding the distinction between Israel and the Church, along with the recognition that God deals with them mutually exclusively, one cannot accurately perceive God's timeline of eschatology.

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CHAPTER 6

GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL TIME-CLOCK - THE MUTUAL EXCLUSIVITY OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

Throughout this study, we have examined this concept of the distinction between Israel and the Church from a number of different angles. We have seen the distinction through understanding the covenants God made. We have seen the distinction through recognizing the unique origins, purposes, and destinies of each. We have seen the scriptural evidence that declares their distinction. And we have seen the witness of their distinction through prophetic typology. We have also examined the origin of the major opposing viewpoint (Replacement Theology), and how it arose from a flawed allegorical hermeneutic that eventually was embraced by the Roman Church, unfortunately becoming the dominant view throughout the history of Christianity. And we've seen how this flawed hermeneutic has manifested in Church-backed anti-Semitism and all of its consequences, leading from Augustine to Auschwitz.

In this final chapter, we will now bring our understanding of this topic to completion by indulging in an exploration of the prophetic timeline of eschatology. The content we will discuss now will allow us to zoom out our viewpoint in order to gain a perspective of the panorama of God's plan for human history – both past and future, as it is all already laid out in scripture. As we explore this topic, you may

be astonished to find out that understanding the distinction between Israel and the Church actually turns out to be a necessary key that unlocks a new realm of clarity for understanding Biblical prophecy and the plan of God as revealed in the Bible. What we have discussed in past chapters should have already unlocked newfound clarity for understanding much of God's purposes and plans in scripture. This chapter will do the same for your perception of eschatology and God's future prophetic timeline.

As we begin, we need to review one necessary concept that we mentioned at the beginning of the study as one of our two main premises. Up until this point, we mainly have discussed the first premise – the idea that Israel and the Church are distinct and that the Church is not a replacement for Israel. But in this chapter – much more so than any of the previous chapters – we will highlight our second premise. Our second premise was that scripture appears to communicate that Israel and the Church are not only distinct, but are actually mutually exclusive in God's timeline. What we mean is that each has its own prophetic time-clock in God's program, and He always deals with them mutually exclusively.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this study, a perfect analogy to this is a chess clock.

Chess clock

If you've never seen or used a chess clock, it's a single device that has two separate clocks side by side. In a formal chess match, each player's turn to move their pieces is limited by time. So, there's a button above each of the two clocks, and when one is pushed to begin counting down the time for one player, the other player's clock automatically stops – and vice versa. In other words, the two clocks are mutually exclusive – when one is running, the other is stopped, and when the running clock stops, the stopped clock begins. This is exactly how it appears God deals with Israel and the Church – and it is also a foundational

key that is essential to accurately understand Biblical prophecy as well as God's overall timeline and plan.

We also noted in the very beginning of this study that the seventy weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27 turns out to be foundational for helping to establish this perspective. In fact, this prophecy acts as the framework, the scaffolding, or the outline for all future prophetic scripture. In other words, it provides a prophetic template for later eschatological revelations, such as Jesus's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Paul's "Day of the Lord" teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2, and the apocalyptic chapters in Revelation (mostly 6-19). We find that all of it can be understood when overlaid onto the eschatological framework provided by this seventy weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9.

Furthermore, with all of that in mind, we can then look back into the Old Testament corpus of eschatological prophecy and easily understand how they align with the timeline laid out here in Daniel and expounded upon elsewhere. But in order for it to all fall into place and be consistent with the rest of the Bible, this concept of the distinction between Israel and the Church – along with their mutual exclusivity in God's timeframe – is necessary to comprehend.

Because a level of understanding concerning the seventy weeks Prophecy is needed as a prerequisite for understanding the content discussed in this chapter, an introductory review is in order.

A Verse-By-Verse Review Of Daniel's Seventy Weeks

The context of this prophecy in Daniel 9 concerns Daniel while he was in Babylon during the Babylonian exile of the Jews. Daniel understood from reading Jeremiah's prophecies that the exile would last for seventy years (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10). He recognized that their restoration depended on national repentance (Jeremiah 29:10-14), so Daniel personally interceded for Israel in prayer.

He prayed specifically for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple, as they had been destroyed by the Babylonians (Daniel 9:3-19). Daniel

apparently expected the immediate and complete fulfillment of Israel's restoration with the conclusion of the seventy-year captivity. However, in these verses of Daniel 9, the future of the Jews and Jerusalem was shown to him by the angel Gabriel (who gave him the seventy weeks prophecy), revealing that Israel's restoration would be progressive and only ultimately fulfilled at the time of the end (see also Daniel 12). Through this prophecy, God decreed that He would complete His Messianic redemption of the Jews and Jerusalem over the course of a seventy-week period (which as we now understand, includes both advents of Christ).

This prophecy in Daniel 9 describes seventy "sevens" (or weeks) of years – in other words, 490 years that would be designated for the Jews and Jerusalem in order to complete six key objectives related to this full Messianic redemption (essentially, to wrap up this age of human history and introduce the Messianic Kingdom).

Let's begin by reading this passage in Daniel 9, beginning with Verse 24 and ending with the last verse of this chapter – Verse 27. We have added some parenthetical inserts in order to help you understand what each part of this prophecy is saying within the context of our topic here. We will then go over each verse in more detail to make sure it's clear.

> **Seventy weeks** are determined **upon thy people** and **upon thy holy city** [meaning the Jews and Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy [basically meaning "to finish this age"].
>
> Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be **seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks** [7 + 62, equaling a total of 69 weeks, or 483 years since each week is 7 years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.
>
> And **after** threescore and two weeks [in other words, after the 62 weeks that follow the 7 weeks, or put another way, after the entire 69

> weeks, or 483 years] shall Messiah be cut off [this happened in 33 AD with the crucifixion of Christ], but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined [this happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem].
>
> And he [referring back to the prince that shall come] shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week** [speaking of the final seventieth week]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.
>
> -Daniel 9:24-27

Let's now begin a verse-by-verse examination of this prophecy in order to explore this in more detail.

Verse 24:

> Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.
>
> -Daniel 9:24

Verse 24 makes it clear to us that seventy weeks of years (70 x 7, or 490 years) are designated by God for the future of the Jews and Jerusalem in order to complete a number of key objectives. It is crucial to first recognize that this seventy weeks prophecy is specifically stated to be intended very specifically for the **Jews** and **Jerusalem** – not the Gentiles, nor the Church. This is one of the foundational points we need to recognize, especially for the purposes of this study, in which our goal is to shed light on how this prophecy acts as the backbone for all future prophecy – and also that it expresses the mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church. Stay sensitive to the idea

that while the seventy weeks time-clock is ticking, Israel (the Jews and Jerusalem) are in focus. But when the clock stops, the Church becomes the focus. You will see this more clearly as we progress, but just understand that the purpose of our examination of this prophecy is to ultimately recognize this simple point.

So, Verse 24 tells us that the seventy weeks are determined for the Jews and Jerusalem in order to accomplish six key objectives. The six objectives are as follows:

- to finish the transgressions
- to make an end of sins
- to make reconciliation for iniquity
- to bring in everlasting righteousness
- to seal up the vision and prophecy
- to anoint the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies)

Since these objectives were not explicitly defined for us, it leaves the interpreter to find a plausible explanation of what they point toward. We believe it is clear that they point towards the culmination of the major Biblical themes of this age – judgment of sin, atonement, forgiveness, and spiritual restoration. **It is critical to recognize that all of these objectives have not yet been fully completed.**

When we look at these themes while using the backdrop of Old and New Testament prophecy, it becomes clear that although some may have been fulfilled – or have begun being fulfilled – it is clear that in the ultimate sense, these events will be brought to complete fulfillment when Israel is brought to spiritual restoration and revival at the time of the Second Coming of Christ and the inauguration of the future Millennial Kingdom. For instance, the fulfillment of at very minimum, the last three objectives, clearly awaits the future time of the end. Let's examine these.

- The phrase "to bring in everlasting righteousness" refers to the Millennial restoration or "age of righteousness" (see Isaiah 1:26; 11:2-5; 32:16-18; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-18).

- This future restoration will also likely "seal up the prophetic vision," as it brings to fulfillment all that it speaks of.

- The final objective – "to anoint the most holy" – looks toward a future dedication of the Temple's Holy of Holies, specifically, the Millennial Temple. The Old Testament tells us all about this in detail. When the Messiah returns in glory, He will build the Millennial Temple (see Ezekiel Chapters 40-48), fill it with the divine presence (Ezekiel 43:1-7), and consecrate it for use throughout the Messianic Age (Isaiah 56:6-7; 60:7; Jeremiah 33:18; Ezekiel 43:11, 18-27; 44:11-28; 45:13-46:15; Zechariah 14:16-21).

From these six objectives, along with the rest of Gabriel's seventy-week explanation, we find a description of the Messiah's mission to Israel, beginning with a countdown that led to His Triumphal Entry and soon after crucifixion as Israel's Savior, and culminating with His reign as Israel's King – events that take place during Christ's First and Second Comings.

So, the ultimate restoration of Israel is yet future. We identify the expected time of completion to be the end of the Tribulation, which is what we term the seventieth week – just prior to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. All of these six objectives will seem to have been achieved by that time.

So then, because they have not yet been fully achieved at this present time, it means that the seventy weeks prophecy has not yet been completed. Instead, we will find that it has been paused. We will discuss this in more detail shortly.

Verse 25:

> Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

-Daniel 9:25

As we pointed out earlier, we have a total of seventy weeks of years, or 490 years. However, Verse 25 focuses on the first sixty-nine weeks of years, separating them from the seventieth. It breaks them down into a first seven weeks of years followed immediately by sixty-two weeks of years (or threescore and two weeks), totaling sixty-nine. It tells us that these sixty-nine weeks of years would be a countdown that begins with a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and culminates with the appearance of the Messiah to Israel. It's a countdown to the arrival of the Messiah, or what Christians would call the "First Coming."

In the companion study entitled "The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy – An Exact Timeline For the Arrival Of The Messiah", we conclusively proved in great detail that this sixty-nine week countdown began during the Hebrew month of Nisan in 444 BC with the decree of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1 and 2), and ended on March 30th of 33 AD at the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Several days following His Triumphal Entry, He was then crucified on April 3rd – a key element which we will see anticipated in the next verse (Verse 26). So, we should recognize that the sixty-nine weeks have concluded long ago. If you have any doubts about this, or would like to understand the evidence for yourself, feel free to consult the aforementioned study.

Verse 26:

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

-Daniel 9:26

Verse 26 discusses the events that occur *after* the completion of the sixty-nine weeks, which we said terminated on March 30th of 33 AD –

the day of the Triumphal Entry, the day Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. So, as stated earlier, we should recognize that the sixty-nine weeks have concluded long ago. So, this verse discusses the events that would *follow* the termination of the sixty-ninth week. It says that *after* the sixty-nine total weeks, the Messiah would then be "cut off," and that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed by a prince who would come. These events happened exactly as this prophecy predicts.

First, as we have shown in the aforementioned study, several days following the Triumphal Entry, Jesus (the Messiah) was cut off. The Triumphal Entry took place on Monday, ending the sixty-nine weeks, and then Jesus was crucified on Friday of that same week – in 33 AD.

Let's briefly discuss this term "cut off" so there is no confusion. The Hebrew term for "cut off" here, is *karath* (Strong's #H3772). This word literally means to be "cut off, cut down, or cut asunder," and is often used to mean that one would be executed or killed.[1] Interestingly, this word also is used to imply the "cutting of a covenant," in which two people would literally cut off a piece of animal flesh and pass between the pieces while making vows – as was done during the giving of the Abrahamic Covenant by God to Abraham in Genesis 15.[2]

Is there any word that better summarizes the work of Christ on the cross? He was "cut off" and rejected by His people, the Jews, and was then executed. But this act of laying down His life was the cornerstone upon which the New Covenant was based! So, there should be no confusion regarding this expression "cut off." It means the Messiah would be executed after the conclusion of the sixty-nine weeks – which, as we have shown in our companion study, Christ was (four days – as we count – following His Triumphal Entry).

Second, Verse 26 then predicts that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed by a prince who would come. This was fulfilled precisely as spoken in this Verse, as the city and the sanctuary were indeed destroyed by a prince who would come about thirty-seven years later in 70 AD. Our knowledge of the history of this time is well-preserved and well-known. History records in detail the actions of the

Roman prince and general, Titus Vespasian, who led the assault on Jerusalem and the Temple, destroying them in 70 AD.[3]

Note: For more information on this, feel free to consult our companion study entitled, "The Luke 19:43-44 Prophecy: The Destruction Of Jerusalem Foretold".

During the Jewish rebellion against Rome in the late 60s AD, Titus' father Vespasian, also formerly a general, had now become the emperor of Rome. He put Titus in charge of carrying out the assault on Jerusalem, which he accomplished in 70 AD – resulting in the massacre and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.[4] So, Titus Vespasian had just become a prince, since his father had just become the emperor – exactly as the prophetic text required.

And like the prophecy states, the end came for Jerusalem in its destruction in 70 AD, and following that, war continued with its desolations, as history has confirmed. The entire countryside was leveled, as recorded in the writings of Josephus, and beginning at that time, the Jewish people over the next century would be sent into a worldwide Diaspora.[5]

So, the fulfillments of this prophetic verse are very clear. But before moving on, we need to pause and take note of something crucial. This crucial point will help us recognize how this seventy week prophecy reveals the mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church. It is simply this – we can clearly infer that the seventy weeks prophecy was put on pause after the completion of the sixty-ninth week. At that time (like we said, at the Triumphal Entry in 33 AD), Israel's time-clock stopped and the Church's time-clock would shortly begin. How did we arrive at this conclusion? Let's examine this.

We've seen that Verse 26 describes events that were said to occur *after* the sixty-ninth week. Should we then believe that the seventieth week immediately followed the sixty-ninth, meaning that the seventy weeks have also long been concluded?

The answer is no, and we will discuss why not. Instead, it's obvious that the seventy weeks were paused at the completion of the

sixty-ninth week and a gap was inserted between the sixty-ninth and seventieth. We know this for many reasons, but maybe most obviously, like we already mentioned, because the six objectives that the seventy weeks were said to accomplish (that we went over in Verse 24) have not yet all been completely fulfilled. In other words, since almost two thousand years have passed since the sixty-ninth week ended in 33 AD (and yet, the six events remain unfulfilled) we know the full 490 years could not yet have occurred. This leaves a future final week – the seventieth week.

But we need to recognize how the mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church play into this scenario. If the seventieth week didn't yet occur, but the sixty-nine weeks have occurred, then the prophetic time-clock for this prophecy must have stopped when the sixty-nine weeks were fulfilled in 33 AD.

We will find that this is indeed the case, as we clearly witness God's "chess-clock" in action. So, Israel's time-clock stopped in 33 AD – which we notice is the same year that the Church's time-clock started (at the establishment of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days following the death of Christ). Like we mentioned earlier in our study, when Israel rejected the King and the Kingdom, God put His program for Israel into postponement and introduced His program called the Church.

So, the picture here is that the first sixty-nine weeks for Israel have been completed. Almost immediately after Israel's time-clock stopped, the Church's time-clock began. And here we are nearly two thousand years later, still in this "gap" period, or this intercalation in-between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. We call this gap the Church Age – the time in which God's interim program called the Church (rather than Israel) is God's instrument to reach humanity.

Throughout the majority of this period called the Church Age, which is primarily dominated by a Gentile presence in the Church, Israel has been almost completely out of the picture – scattered throughout the nations. For most of this time, Israel has not had a controlling presence in Jerusalem, and Israel has not had a Temple. In fact, one of the reasons we believe that the time-clock may be

preparing to switch back toward Israel again soon, is because of the obvious way in which God's focus appears to be shifting back towards Israel in the past century, with their return to the land, with Israel's reemergence as a sovereign state, and with the Jews' increasing control of Jerusalem. Just as there was a period of roughly forty years following the pausing of Israel's time-clock and the complete destruction of the city and sanctuary in 70 AD, there may be a reversal of that taking place currently, as Israel's presence back in the land seems to be in preparation for this prophetic seventieth week to begin. With that being said, however, we cannot use this to predict the nearness of end-time events with any specificity.

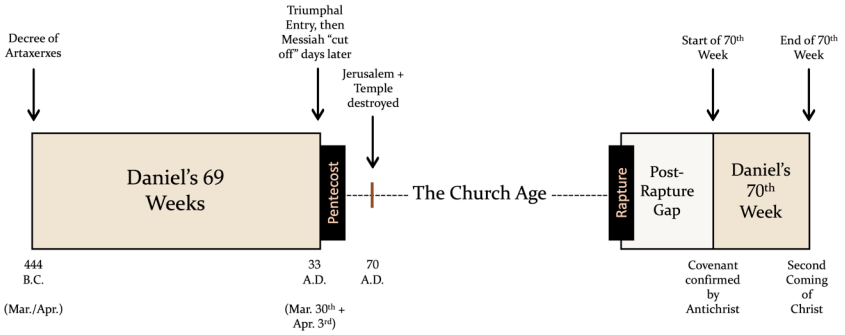
This current Church Age period will continue until the culminating event of the Church Age – the Rapture. At the Rapture, the time-clock for the Church will permanently stop as the Church Age believers are supernaturally removed from the earth. A post-Rapture gap period will likely follow, which is then succeeded by the Tribulation, or seventieth week, which reactivates the time-clock for Israel.

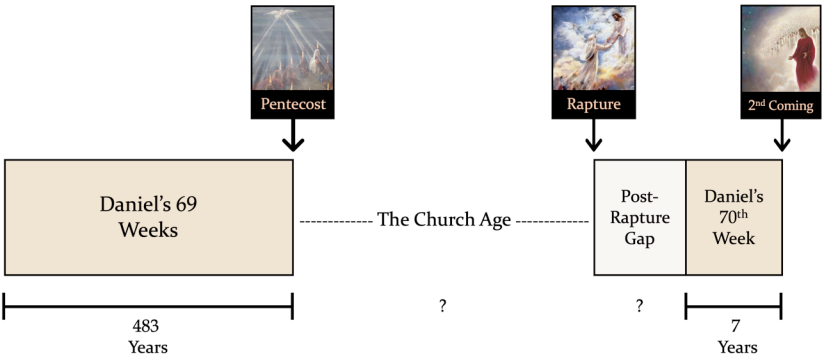
You will see that it is impossible to believe that the Church goes through the Tribulation if you understand the distinction between Israel and the Church, as well as the principle of their mutual exclusivity in God's seventy-week prophetic framework. As we mentioned earlier, the seventy weeks are designated specifically for the Jews and Jerusalem. The Church was not around during the first sixty-nine weeks, and will not (and cannot) be around during the final seventieth week either. The Church is an intercalation – or an interim program – in God's seventy-week calendar for Israel.

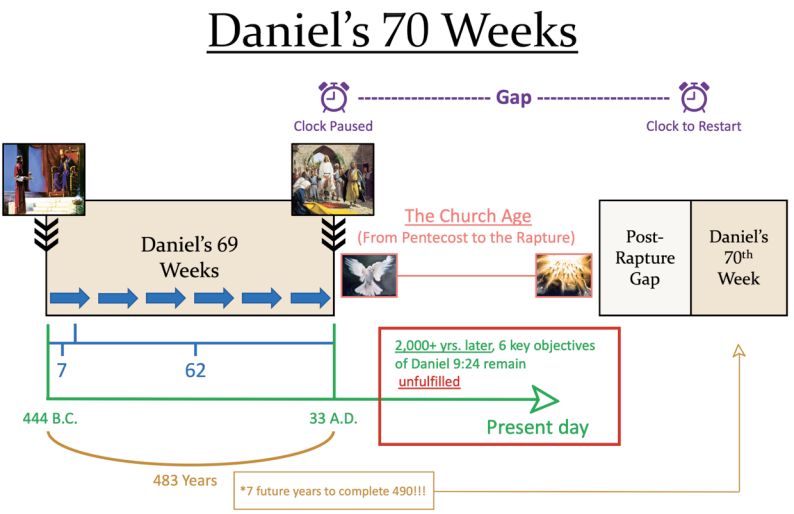
What we have just discussed is the overarching understanding we are attempting to get across here in this chapter. For a visual of what we've just discussed, please refer to the following charts.

Daniel's 70 Weeks Timeline

(Daniel 9:24-27)







So, again, the major point here is that when Israel's clock is running, the Church's clock is off – and vice versa. This entire concept anchors our awareness of the two main premises of this study – the distinction between Israel and the Church as two separate entities, as well as the idea that God deals with them mutually exclusively. They are two separate plans of God in the earth, like two trains moving on two different tracks. It is impossible to precisely understand scripture – especially eschatology – without the benefit of these insights. Let's now continue to Verse 27.

Verse 27:

> And **he** shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week:** and in the **midst of the week he** shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.
>
> -Daniel 9:27

Verse 27 seems to make an unusual jump to describing the begin-

ning of the mysterious seventieth week, but gives no description of how the events following the sixty-nine weeks link into the seventieth. Our understanding of the previous verse is clear that the sixty-nine weeks were completed, and tells us of events that would occur *after* their completion – **forcing us to recognize a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.** The sixty-nine weeks concluded on March 30th, 33 AD at the Triumphal Entry. Then *after* that, Jesus the Messiah was "cut off" four days later. Then still even further *after* that, the city and sanctuary were destroyed almost forty years later in 70 AD. So, any way you cut it, this passage mandates a gap of time following the sixty-nine weeks.

But when we look at Verse 27 and notice its description of the final seventieth week, the question is, *when* should we understand this final week to occur? Did it occur in 70 AD? Or, is it yet future? The only point of continuity or linkage with the previous verse is the use of the pronoun "he," which would seem to refer back to the antecedent – "prince that shall come" in Verse 26.

We are told that a covenant will be confirmed (or enforced), which would appear to be the marker for the beginning of the final seventieth week – "and *he* shall confirm the covenant with many for one week". We are then told of a marker that would appear to designate the middle of the seventieth week – "and in the midst of the week *he* shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease…" There is often much confusion as to whether these events have already happened, or if we should understand them to be future events.

The identification of the pronoun "he" in this verse has been the topic of much debate. While some believe it refers to the "Messiah the Prince" originally mentioned in Verse 25, others believe it refers to the "prince that shall come" mentioned toward the end of Verse 26. In normal laws of reference in language, a pronoun refers back to the last preceding person mentioned. In this case, the antecedent is "the prince that shall come" in Verse 26 (which we have already identified with Titus Vespasian).

Those who instead argue that "he" means the Messiah face a number of difficulties. For example, if this is taken to mean Christ

confirming the New Covenant (as some have suggested), it immediately runs into major problems, as the New Covenant is obviously longer than seven years in duration. Further, those who apply this to Christ often apply the first half of the final seven years to Jesus's earthly ministry. However, doing that would overlap the seventieth week with the sixty-ninth week, which we showed in our companion study to have been still in progress until 33 AD. Further yet, there are no noteworthy events to designate as markers that would conclude the seventieth week if you applied this to the years following 33 AD.

Another eliminating factor for the "Messiah view" is the reality that we know Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, not the Jewish people – and therefore the "he" in Verse 27 cannot refer to the "Messiah the Prince" in Verse 25. Dwight Pentecost, quoting Alva McClain, writes…

> The expression "prince that shall come" cannot possibly refer to "Messiah the Prince" for the simple reason that it is "**the people** of the prince that shall come" who are to destroy Jerusalem after the death of Messiah. And since it is now a matter of history that Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman people, not by the Jewish people, it follows that "the prince that shall come" cannot be the Jewish Messiah…[6]

But the most problematic issue for a "Messiah view" is probably the great number of parallel prophetic passages that clearly identify the seventieth week as a future time period that terminates with the Second Coming of Christ – a period often called the Tribulation. Since the Tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ are clearly and obviously portrayed in scripture as future events, then this requires a futurist interpretation of this prophecy. This is the view that we of course embrace.

So, we find that the better interpretation of the pronoun "he" is in reference to the "prince that shall come." The next obvious question becomes, "if it refers to the prince, who we already identified as Titus

Vespasian, how can this prophecy be yet future?" Let's begin to explore the answer to this question.

Many interpreters (especially Preterists) have interpreted Verse 27 to have already been fulfilled in the first century AD with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Preterism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets the prophecies of the Bible as being events which have been fulfilled in the past, mainly in the first century.[7] The term Preterism comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning "past." Preterism is directly opposed to futurism, which sees the end times prophecies as having a still-future fulfillment.

Another typical aspect of Preterism is the belief that Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian Church following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.[8] In other words, this view falls into the camp of Replacement Theology. So, most Preterists don't accept the basic premises of this study – the distinction between Israel and the Church, their mutual exclusivity, and the idea that the Church has not replaced Israel.

Preterists generally attribute the complete fulfillment to Daniel 9:27 to the actions of Titus Vespasian and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Many Preterists have noted the similarities between the actions of Titus and the content of Verse 27 – "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Titus put an end to sacrifice and offering by destroying Jerusalem and the Temple. The Romans set up their pagan emblems on the eastern wing of the Temple and offered sacrifices to them. The Jewish/Roman historian Josephus, who was there, records all of this in *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 6.[9]

At quick glance, and when isolating this passage from the rest of the Biblical commentary on the seventieth week, this interpretation may appear convincing. Yet, when we utilize a systematic, precise, literal reading of all of the parallel Biblical passages that also discuss the seventieth week, we find that this Preterist view is indefensible.

Earlier, we mentioned that numerous future end times discourses in the New Testament were given based upon this template of Daniel 9:24-27. Jesus's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Paul's teaching on

the eschatological "Day of the Lord" in 2 Thessalonians 2, and the apocalyptic prophecies of Revelation 6-19 are all prime examples. These passages all act as parallel or clarifying Biblical commentary on the events of the seventieth week, expounding upon this particular verse (Verse 27). Their plain, literal readings necessitate a future context of interpretation – meaning the events that Verse 27 describes cannot have found ultimate fulfillment in 70 AD, or any other time up until the present. Further ahead, we will allude to some of these parallel prophecies, as well as other passages that clearly depict the seventieth week as being a future end times period involving the desecrating actions of the figure often called the Antichrist. We will see that the only Biblically coherent way to understand the seventieth week is through the futurist interpretation.

But let's focus our attention on the question we posed earlier. If the pronoun "he" in Verse 27 refers to the "prince that shall come," who we already identified as Titus Vespasian in Verse 26, then how can this prophecy be yet future? In order to further answer this question, we need to make note of several key peculiarities that we repeatedly note in prophetic scripture.

First, we shouldn't be surprised that between Verse 26 and Verse 27 exists a gap of time (if there is a significant gap here, then by that fact alone we cannot understand the "he" in Verse 27 to refer to Titus Vespasian who is referred to in Verse 26). It is somewhat common in scripture for a prophecy to, in the course of a single line, or even in the space of a comma, jump from one fulfillment event to another, being hundreds or even thousands of years apart.

As we discussed in an earlier chapter, this is a common occurrence in Bible prophecy due to the hidden nature of the Church Age in prophetic God's program. Between the "mountain peaks" of Bible prophecy is the "valley" of the Church Age, which was hidden from view to the Old Testament prophets. As we discussed, their prophecies often discuss events fulfilled at Christ's First Coming and seemingly flow right into events that will take place at His Second Coming (two prophetic "mountain peak" events). Through the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that they skip over the several thousand years

we've experienced so far in the Church Age. If while initially reading them, you didn't already know there was a mystery gap period (the Church Age) inserted in between, you'd think they were all continuous and uninterrupted prophecies.

A prime example of this is the clear gap between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10. Verse 9 is a clear prophecy related to Jesus's First Coming, describing His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem several days prior to His crucifixion. Verse 10 then immediately moves to a Second Coming context, prophetically describing the glorious return of Christ as the conquering Messiah who will defeat His enemies and establish His Millennial reign on earth.

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.
>
> And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.
>
> -Zechariah 9:9-10

From an Old Testament perspective prior to Christ, one would be hard-pressed to recognize a prophetic gap that separates these two verses. But by virtue of hindsight, the gap becomes clear. Between the events of Christ's two comings lies the Church Age, a mystery intercalation in God's program. Scholar Warren Wiersbe writes:

> The entire age of the Church fits between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10, just as it does between Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and after the comma in Isaiah 61:2.[10]

As Wiersbe notes, this prophetic gap is also obvious in Isaiah 9:6-7. Note how clearly the beginning of Verse 6 refers to the First Coming, but then immediately shifts to Second Coming events.

> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
>
> Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.
>
> -Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah's prophecy of a child being born and a son being given obviously refers to Jesus's Incarnation at His First Coming. But then the passage immediately transitions to a Second Coming context in everything that follows. While Wiersbe suggests that the transition takes place between the two verses, we must point out that the government has never yet been upon Jesus's shoulder. This will not take place until He establishes His earthly reign following His Second Coming. Jesus has also never been called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" by the Jewish nation to which He was sent and to whom this prophecy was given. This will not occur until all of Israel is brought to faith around the time of the Second Coming and establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. Therefore, the gap is actually located in Verse 6 between the phrases "unto us a son is given" and "and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

Verse 7 then continues to describe the establishment of Christ's earthly reign in the Millennial Kingdom, which follows the Second Coming. So, again, without the benefit of hindsight, it would seem as if these prophecies flow together. But because we can look back on them with the clarity of New Testament revelation, it becomes obvious that a mystery time-gap separates them.

Wiersbe also mentions Isaiah 61:2, possibly the most classic example of this "hidden gap" phenomena in all of scripture. Jesus Christ Himself interpreted this for us in Luke 4:16-19. This passage records how at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus stood up in the

synagogue when it was His turn to read, and opened to the book of the prophet Isaiah. He proceeded to read Isaiah 61:1-2, proclaiming His mission at His First Coming. He finishes with His mandate: "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." What you probably wouldn't realize without going back to Isaiah to read the original prophecy, is that Jesus stopped reading right in the middle of the sentence! The rest reads, "and the day of vengeance of our God…"

Jesus stopped reading at the comma that preceded "and the day of vengeance of our God…" He left that last segment out. Why? Because we now understand that after that comma, the prophecy jumped from the time of the Messiah's First Coming to some several thousand years or more into the future – past the present time in which we are now living, to the time of His Second Coming. The "day of vengeance" was not part of His mission during His First Coming, but it will be fulfilled at His Second Coming. So, in the original prophecy in Isaiah, we see that one comma separated several thousand years of history (to date), but this gap would have been unknown and undetectable to the original readers.

This is exactly what we also see happening in Daniel 9:26-27, as thousands of years separate the two verses – and yet, from a casual reading, they seem to flow together. This explains how the *timing* context of Verse 26 can involve the first century, while the context of Verse 27 can involve the future seventieth week.

But how can the *personal* context shift from Titus Vespasian in Verse 26 to the future Antichrist in Verse 27? If the "he" in Verse 27 refers back to the antecedent (Titus Vespasian, the prince that shall come) in Verse 26, then how can we say the Antichrist is meant? In scripture, there are also many examples of multiple reference prophecies. In these prophecies, it's clear who the original subject is, but then at some point in the text, the prophecy clearly begins to transcend that local person and point to a person of far greater significance who will act as the *ultimate* fulfillment.

One example of a multiple reference prophecy is found in the Book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 28:12-19), which gives a description of someone called the King of Tyre. Although there was an actual historical person

who was the King of Tyre, the description the Bible gives of this person at some point seems to go far beyond just describing this human leader. Though in context, Ezekiel was first speaking about the historical King of Tyre, at some point in the prophecy, he seemingly moved into the dateless past with a description of the original fall of Satan – the true power behind the earthly King of Tyre.

This also seems to be happening here in Daniel 9:26-27. Verse 26 obviously refers to the actions of Titus Vespasian, and yet we understand from the many other parallel prophetic passages in scripture that the events of Verse 27 are yet-future. And so, even though the pronoun "he" from Verse 26 is carried into Verse 27 without any obvious change in context, we understand from these other parallel supporting texts that the "he" in Verse 27 clearly transcends Titus – and instead, refers to the coming Antichrist in the eschatological seventieth week.

Furthermore, it is even possible that the events of Verse 27 as a whole do find a typological *near-term* fulfillment in the events of 70 AD. In other words, Titus Vespasian and the events of 70 AD may be in some ways a prophetic type (like a prototype) of the Antichrist and his future actions. And as usual with typology, the type is not identical in all ways to the antitype.

That is perfectly compatible with the futurist interpretation, as futurists recognize the routine usage of dual fulfillment prophecies in scripture, as we just outlined. For instance, we find something similar in Daniel 11:31, another place in which the term abomination of desolation is referenced, which futurist scholars understand to have both near-term and far-term fulfillments. This is the essence of prophetic typology, and there is no limit to the number of types that can occur. It is often a reoccurring pattern that has the purpose of prefiguring an ultimate future far-term fulfillment event.

In the near-term sense, this passage (Daniel 11:31) refers to the events that took place in 167 BC, in which a Seleucid-Greek ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes erected an idol of Zeus in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem – and also sacrificed a pig on the altar. This historical abomination of desolation is the event that lead to the

Maccabean Revolt, in which the Greeks were expelled from Judea, and the Temple was then cleansed and rededicated. This historical event is commemorated by the Jews each year at Hanukkah.

But in the far-term sense, this passage in Daniel 11 also appears to transcend this and find ultimate fulfillment in the actions of the Antichrist during the future seventieth week. This is made clear for us in many ways, but maybe most obviously in the fact that Jesus referenced this event in Matthew 24:15 and spoke of it in the future tense. In other words, He implied that this historical event would be recapitulated in a final abomination of desecration that will constitute the ultimate fulfillment.

Further yet, this future understanding is also confirmed in the fact that the Daniel 11 narrative (which flows into Daniel 12), like the Matthew 24 narrative, ends with the Second Coming of Christ. In other words, this chapter in Daniel is yet another example of a prophecy that begins to transcend the local near-term application and end with a far more significant and ultimate event that is clearly in the future. And like Daniel 9:26-27, you will find that Daniel 11 also skips over several thousand years of the Church Age, culminating in the Second Coming event described early in Chapter 12. This concept alone refutes the Preterist view that "all of this has already happened." If it already happened, when did the Second Coming take place? Scripture is clear that these seventieth week events end with the Second Coming of Christ.

So, this prophecy of an abomination of desolation that we see described in Daniel 11:31 did describe an actual historical event that has occurred in the past, yet we also understand it to be a type or a shadow of an ultimate fulfillment yet to come. Like we said, this may also be the case in Daniel 9:27 with the actions of Titus Vespasian in 70 AD. But at most, they only act as a shadow of something yet-future that will occur in the seventieth week. **And as is the case in many of these instances, the near-term fulfillment doesn't perfectly fit the prophecy.**

In other words, a shadow is hazy and indistinct. The actual object casting the shadow is detailed and well-defined. Even if we ignore the

host of parallel passages necessitating an end times context, there are a number of other reasons why Daniel 9:27's ultimate fulfillment could not have been found in the events of 70 AD. The most obvious reason is that the abomination of desolation refers most specifically to the desecrating action of a Gentile outsider erecting a false god in the Holy of Holies – **and Titus did not do this.** He did not even step foot into the Temple until it was already on fire and about to be destroyed. In fact, history records that Titus had actually ordered his men to preserve the Temple. Yet, due to their anger against the Jews, they disobeyed the order of their general and set fire to the Temple, destroying it and pillaging it of its gold.[11] The *Jewish Encyclopedia* records this ancient historical account, telling us:

> One of the Roman soldiers, weary of fighting, threw a burning piece of wood into the Temple. In vain did Titus give orders to extinguish the flames; his voice was drowned in the uproar. Titus himself, impelled by curiosity, entered the Sanctuary, but the smoke forced him to withdraw; and thus the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem became associated with his name.[12]

So, in some ways you can make the argument that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was a type of an abomination of desolation event, and yet it doesn't completely fit the bill regarding everything the Bible tells us about the ultimate and final desolation. Parallel prophetic passages in the Bible tell us that the ultimate future abomination of desolation will involve the Antichrist physically standing in the Holy of Holies claiming to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). We will see this further ahead in our study. It is therefore impossible to apply the full and ultimate fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 to Titus Vespasian and the events of 70 AD. At most, it can represent a partial near-term fulfillment or a type that will be ultimately fulfilled by the Antichrist in the future seventieth week – the Tribulation.

And so, although it can be confusing to read Daniel 9:26-27 in isolation and without the benefit of other clarifying parallel passages, we should not allow this to cause us to misinterpret the text as Preter-

ists and others do. Along with the host of additional insights presented, we do also have the other clarifying passages that clearly detail this final week, and we must not view Daniel 9 in isolation. We must take into account the entire corpus of Biblical commentary on this subject before formulating our conclusion.

In the next subsection, we will look deeper into the events of this seventieth week and the actions of the Antichrist during this period. Overall, our objective will be to further explore God's purposes for Israel during this time period – and to witness how this furthers our awareness of the distinction and mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church.

A Deeper Look at Israel's Seventieth Week

Let's begin with a quick review of the last subsection, as we transition into a deeper exploration of it. We focused on understanding the identification of the pronoun "he" in Daniel 9:26 and 27 (part of Daniel's famous "seventy weeks prophecy" in Daniel 9:24-27). We concluded that this figure refers to Titus Vespasian and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, we noted how, especially in Verse 27, the identity of this figure clearly transcends Titus Vespasian, and in a more ultimate sense, refers to the character many know as the Antichrist – and his final act of desecration (the abomination of desolation) in the future rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem during the final seventieth week (or the Tribulation). When we look at this while enjoying the benefit of the other clarifying parallel passages in scripture, we can clearly see that the actions of Titus may, at most, act as a mere shadow of this ultimate and final evil figure. And this abomination of desolation that this ultimate figure causes, is clearly in the context of a future end-times event that occurs prior to Christ's Second Coming.

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We are told that this future Antichrist character will confirm or enforce a covenant, presumably with Israel, since the context of the seventy weeks is the Jews and Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24). We don't know exactly what this covenant, or treaty, is, **but we know it marks the beginning of the final week.** Many believe it has something to do with the Temple, since we're told that in the middle of the week, he will cause the "sacrifice and the oblation to cease." In other words, be breaks his covenant.

This of course, implies that the Jews will be back in the land (this part already is being fulfilled, and has been for the last century with the Jews returning to Israel). It implies that the Jews will have rebuilt the Temple and have returned to the Levitical system of sacrifices (these things have not yet been fulfilled, but are well under way). This expectation of the Temple being rebuilt in the final seventieth week aligns with the rest of prophetic scripture, as Jesus, Paul, and John all allude to its existence at that future time.

Verse 27 also tells us that "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Although we touched on this in the last subsection, let's delve into it further here, but this time connecting it with the words of Jesus, who described a future event that will transpire in similar fashion.

Many Christians are surprised to find out that the New Testament actually refers to the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah. This reference is found in John 10:22 – called the "feast of dedication" in the winter, which refers to Hanukkah. Scripture seems to assume that its readers should be familiar with this event. Why? Because this rededication of the Temple was a pivotal event in "recent" Jewish history at the time the New Testament was written.

Earlier, we referenced the abomination of desolation committed by Antiochus Epiphanes (the Greek-Seleucid ruler) in 167 BC. Among many of his other actions of persecution toward the Jews, He most

famously erected an idol to Zeus in the Holy of Holies and sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple.

As we also mentioned, the near-term fulfillment of this abomination of desolation event was prophesied of by Daniel in Daniel 11:31 several hundred years before it took place. Then, around two hundred years *after* the events of Antiochus's desolation, Jesus makes reference to the abomination of desolation in a prophetic briefing (which we call the Olivet Discourse) given to His disciples, as recorded in Matthew 25:15.

> **When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,** stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
>
> -Matthew 24:15

Jesus was referring back to the events surrounding Antiochus's desecration of the Temple – which any Jew, especially in His day, would have been intimately familiar with. Yet, Jesus spoke of it in a *future* eschatological context, allowing us to understand that the ultimate fulfillment is still to come. Jesus was answering the disciples' question of, "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" in Verse 3 of Matthew 24.

Daniel doesn't only mention the abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31 and 9:27, but he also mentions it in Daniel 12:11, in which it's used as a marker for this time period near the end of the age. The context of Daniel 12 is clearly the eschatological future Tribulation and Second Coming.

So, there should be no confusion about the fact that Jesus's discourse in Matthew 24 was focusing on end time events that will occur during the judgment phase of the broad period of the Day of the Lord, of which the seventieth week of Daniel (or the Tribulation) is the concluding and culminating subset. The actions of Antiochus that occurred two hundred years before Jesus made this statement were simply the shadow, or type of an ultimate fulfillment, or antitype. Jesus was telling His listeners that

there will be an ultimate abomination of desolation in the future seventieth week, perpetrated by the Antichrist. This interpretation also aligns with the other parallel passages describing this event and time period – such as Daniel 7, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 13.

So, we understand from the words of Jesus that this future leader will evidently repeat (ultimately fulfilling) the "abomination of desolation" event performed by Antiochus in 167/168 BC – and possibly in some ways also foreshadowed by Titus Vespasian in 70 AD. But as we discussed in the previous subsection, the actions of Titus do not perfectly fulfill what Jesus spoke of, as for one thing, he did not erect an idol inside the Holy of Holies in the Temple, nor do anything even remotely similar. History records that he did not even want the Temple to be burned and destroyed.

In fact, this prophetic event that Jesus described has not yet happened since the time He predicted it – which is another reason we know the seventieth week has not yet occurred. However, a Roman emperor did once unsuccessfully try. This was Caligula in 40 AD, who instructed his general Petronius to erect his image in the Holy of Holies. Petronius refused, knowing this would result in a Jewish revolt. Before Petronius could be executed for his refusal, Caligula died, letting him off the hook.[13] It would seem God would not allow this type of desecration to happen again until the seventieth week, as predicted by Daniel and Jesus.

Let's now look further into the timeline and events of this future and final week. There are around thirty-three titles for the Antichrist in the Old Testament, and thirteen in the New. For example, he's called the "Beast" in Revelation Chapters 11 and 13. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul calls him the "Man of Sin" and the "Son of Perdition;" then in Verse 8, he calls him the "Lawless One." John calls him the Antichrist (or pseudo-christ) in 1 John 2.

We understand from Daniel 9:27 that this Antichrist or Beast will confirm a covenant for seven years, but in the middle of this week (or three and a half years into this final seventieth week), he will put a stop to the daily sacrifices and will commit the abomination of desolation. Revelation 13 gives us a clue as to what this abomination entails,

as it explains that the Beast will have an image of himself that all are required to worship – and that the image will in some way become animated.

> Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should **make an image to the beast,** which had the wound by a sword, and did live.
>
> **And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.**
>
> -Revelation 13:14-15

Daniel 11:31 seems to imply that this image will be placed in the Temple, similar to how Antiochus Epiphanes erected an idol of Zeus in the Temple.

> And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall **pollute the sanctuary of strength,** and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and **they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.**
>
> -Daniel 11:31

2 Thessalonians 2 tells us the Antichrist will also himself sit in the Temple, as if he was God, requiring the world to worship him.

> Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and **that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition** [the Antichrist];
>
> Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**
>
> -2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

This aligns with the statement by Jesus in Matthew 24:15, saying that the abomination of desolation would "stand in the Holy Place" in the Temple.

> When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **stand in the holy place**, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
>
> -Matthew 24:15

Revelation 13:5 says that this will go on for forty-two months, which is three and a half years. Since Daniel 9:27 says that this will happen in the "middle of the week," and Revelation 13:5 says that the Beast will do this for a period of forty-two months, it is easy to see that the total length of time in this "week" is eighty-four months, or seven years. Also see Daniel 7:25, which mentions "time, times, and half a time" (time = one year; times = two years; half a time = half a year; giving a total of three and a half years). What happens during this three and a half year period?

- Daniel 7:25 describes it as the period that Tribulation saints are given into the Antichrist's hands.

- Daniel 9:27 describes it as the period between the breaking of the Antichrist's covenant with Israel and subsequent abomination of desolation, and the establishment of Jesus's earthly Kingdom.

- Daniel 12:7 describes it as the duration of the worst "time of trouble" for Israel.

- Revelation 11:2 describes it as the period that the holy city will be tread underfoot by Gentiles.

- Revelation 11:3 seems to describe it as the period of ministry for the Two Witnesses, though some believe this takes place in the first half of the week.

- Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 describes it as the period that the remnant of Israel is preserved by God in the wilderness.

- Revelation 13:5 describes it as the duration of Antichrist's authority to rule, persecute and blaspheme.

So, taking all these together, we are obviously dealing with the last half of Daniel's seventieth week – a time repeatedly described in scripture with more detail than any other time in human history.

In Matthew 24, Jesus tells us that the abomination of desolation that occurs around this mid-point of the seventieth week is a marker for the beginning of "great tribulation" – the name we now commonly apply to this final three and a half year period (the Great Tribulation). He also tells the Jews living in Jerusalem at that time that when they see this event take place, it will be their sign to immediately flee, as it will initiate a time of unparalleled distress for Israel.

> **When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,** (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
>
> Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:
>
> Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
>
> Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.
>
> And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
>
> But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
>
> For then shall be **great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**
>
> -Matthew 24:15-21

So, let's review. From the passages we've examined – and a few that we only referenced in passing – that all describe this abomination of desolation (which the reader is commanded by Jesus to understand), we see that it includes the following elements:

- It occurs in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

- It marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, or the latter three and a half years of the final seventieth week of Daniel – the worst persecution against the Jewish people in history (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15, 21).

- It seems to involve the Antichrist setting up a statue or some sort of image of himself so that he may be worshipped in place of God (Daniel 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).

- The image is made to come to life or become animated in some way (Revelation 13:14).

- A worship system of this false god is thus inaugurated (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).

- The Antichrist himself sits in the Temple claiming to be God and demanding worship (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

- The abomination results in the cessation of the regular sacrifice (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

- At the end of this time period, the Antichrist who commits the act will himself be cut off (Daniel 9:27).

We've conducted this introductory review in order to give a basis of understanding for how to understand the prophetic timeline or framework of Daniel 9:24-27 as it relates to eschatology and this subject of the distinction and mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church.

So, now that we have a sufficient baseline of understanding concerning the major events and divisions of this final seventieth

week of time for Israel, in the next subsection, we will begin to examine what Biblical prophecy says about this time period within the context of the nation of Israel. Doing this will continue to sharpen our perceptions regarding the mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church in God's program.

God's Plan for Israel in the Future Seventieth Week

Throughout this study, we have alluded to the fact that scripture shows us that Israel will be brought into this final week sometime following the Rapture of the Church. We have also mentioned how this final week has as one of its primary purposes, the objective of using trouble and trial to bring national Israel to repentance and faith in her true Messiah. We have also mentioned that a remnant of national Israel will turn to Christ at the end of this seven years of intense trouble, calling out to Him and petitioning His return – resulting in His Second Coming to save them. Let's now take a closer look at this and examine some more of the prophetic details that scripture provides.

This one period of time is probably the most prophetically anticipated period of time in the Bible – no other period of time is documented more thoroughly and extensively. In Revelation and other parts of Daniel, this final seventieth week – or Tribulation – is described in precise detail. The characteristics of this time period are well-known, and are extensively alluded to throughout the Old Testament prophets and in the sayings of Jesus in the gospels.

We recognize that this Great Tribulation spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24 will be a time of trouble unlike anything else. Like we've said, this is a prophecy concerning the future of national Israel, and has nothing to do with the Church. This will be a time of intense trouble for the whole world, but mainly focused on national Israel. These concepts that Jesus is speaking about should be easily understood for any student of the Old Testament. Jesus was in effect, quoting from the Book of Daniel. Daniel 12:1 says:

> And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:** and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.
>
> -Daniel 12:1

So, Jesus is clear in Matthew 24 that the time that is coming is a time of trouble that will be unprecedented. Understanding Jewish history, that is a difficult truth to embrace, as the Jews have already endured some of the worst persecution imaginable. One Jew out of every three was said to have been killed during the Nazi Holocaust, but the "time of trouble" that is coming in the latter half of the seventieth week will be much worse.

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah prophesied extensively about this time period. He prophesied the following regarding the Israel in the context of the Tribulation.

> And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, **two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.**
>
> And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.
>
> -Zechariah 13:8-9

In the Holocaust, one out of every three was said to have been killed, but in this coming Great Tribulation, the Jews' own scriptures, right here in Zechariah, declare that it will be two out of every three. This is an awful thing to even think about, and we do not as Christians take any pleasure in contemplating this; but it clearly is what the Word of God says. This time period is referred to here by Zechariah as a refiner's fire, and is also widely referred to in Bible prophecy (espe-

cially the Old Testament) as a time period of God's wrath or indignation. For instance, Zephaniah puts it this way:

> That day is a **day of wrath,** a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,
>
> -Zephaniah 1:15

In Daniel's apocalyptic vision, he was told:

> He said, 'Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of **the indignation,** for it refers to the appointed time of the end.
>
> -Daniel 8:19

It is also called a time of great trouble. For instance, Jeremiah refers to it as the "time of Jacob's trouble," referring to the Jews collectively as Jacob – their forefather.

> Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even **the time of Jacob's trouble,** but he shall be saved out of it.
>
> -Jeremiah 30:7

This description of the Great Tribulation as "the time of Jacob's trouble" is one of the puzzle pieces helpful in allowing us to realize that although this is a worldwide Tribulation, its primary focus is on the Jews, or Israel – this being in line with the concept of Daniel's seventy weeks being designated specifically for the Jews and Jerusalem.

Jacob was the patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel, whose name was later changed to Israel (Genesis 32). So, this passage is clear in telling us that this is a time of trouble that is especially focused upon Israel. This passage also tells us that this ultimate time of trouble will be unlike any other period of time in the long and unfortunate history of Jewish persecution – "none is like it." As we referred to earlier, this

period of time will unfortunately, make the Holocaust look like a minor event.

One of the most important verses for understanding this period is found in Hosea, and helps answer the question of "what is the purpose of the Tribulation, as it concerns Israel?" You will see that the answer to this question helps sharpen our perception of the distinction between Israel and the Church and how God deals with them mutually exclusively, allowing us to recognize that the Tribulation, or the seventieth week – and in fact the entire judgment phase of the broad Day of the Lord – has absolutely nothing to do with the Church.

> I will go and return to my place, **till** they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.
> -Hosea 5:15

Note that the word "early" in this passage actually means "earnestly."[14] This passage records God speaking in the first person, saying that He will go and return to His place. First of all, this would make no sense if God had never left His place (heaven) – He couldn't go back if He never left it. But this makes perfect sense in light of the Incarnation, where God came to earth in a body as a genuine human. Through the manifestation of the Son, Christ Jesus, God in flesh *did* come to earth. And He will one day return. When? This verse tells us! He said He wouldn't return *"till"* – or *until* they acknowledge their offense (which we will see was rejecting their Messiah), and seek God's face. In other words, He will not return until they repent, acknowledge Him as their true Messiah, and petition His return.

So, this passage shows us that one of the main purposes of the Tribulation (here described as "their affliction") is to drive the Jews to repentance! It is unfortunate that it will take such extreme affliction in order to accomplish that, yet their own scriptures plainly say it.

Again, we can clearly see that the Tribulation – the seventieth week – has absolutely nothing to do with the Church, but part of its entire purpose directly concerns Israel. In fact, a key point to make note of is that the New Testament makes it very clear that the Church is actually

antithetical to the Tribulation. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that God has not appointed the Church to wrath. The pouring out of God's wrath in judgment upon a world that has completely turned against Him is what the Tribulation by definition is the culmination of, within the broad Day of the Lord (as the wicked earth dwellers in Revelation 6:16-17 finally recognize), and is exactly the context of what this passage written by Paul is referring to.

Jesus Himself declares this same concept in Revelation 3:10, telling us that the Church will be kept from the *time* of God's wrath altogether.

> Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the **hour** of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
>
> -Revelation 3:10

Jesus promises to keep the Church out of this time period altogether (here called the "hour of temptation"). He will keep us from the "hour" itself. Of course, the only way for that to happen is for us to be removed from the earth altogether, prior to its onset – which is exactly what the Rapture involves.

So, this is another way in which we grasp the mutual exclusivity of Israel and the Church – they cannot both be active on earth during the Tribulation. The Tribulation is for Israel, and is a period of time that is totally incompatible with the Church's existence on earth. The Church must be removed prior to Israel's seventieth week, or the seven-year Tribulation. We will discuss this subject further in the following subsection.

Another key point to note is that the passage we were looking at in Hosea also declares that the Jews' repentance is actually a pre-condition for the Second Coming of Christ! God said He wouldn't return *"till"* – or *until* they acknowledge their offense and seek His face. This is one of the key differentiators between the Rapture (or supernatural removal) of the Church and the Second Coming. The Rapture – when the Church is removed from the earth – *has no preconditions.* We refer to

this concept as the "Doctrine of Imminence." We find that the New Testament consistently describes the Rapture as an imminent event.[15]

In other words, it's a sign-less, sudden event that has no preconditions. Yet, concerning the Second Coming, which is described in Hosea 5:15, we clearly see that Israel's repentance acts as a precondition in order for it to take place. If the Church was on earth during the seventieth week and the Rapture is the same event as the Second Coming, then this would violate the Doctrine of Imminence so clearly described in the New Testament. This concept of imminence helps us anchor our perception that the Church will be removed *prior* to the seventieth week – which we refer to as a pretribulational Rapture (which again, we will discuss further in the next subsection).

The only way for the Rapture to be imminent is for it to be the next event to occur for the Church. If it were to occur for example, at the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation, then it would cease to be imminent. Its timing would be entirely knowable and predictable, since Daniel, Matthew 24, and Revelation provide us with a detailed roadmap of this period, broken down in seemingly every measure of time except for nanoseconds! This would be the direct opposite of sudden and signless (or imminent). The Rapture must therefore take place *prior* to the other eschatological events spoken of in scripture. Christ's coming for the Church will precede His coming for Israel by at least seven years. So, we can continue to see the many ways in which, according to scripture, Israel and the Church are mutually exclusive.

But let's get back to Hosea 5:15 and even more clearly understand what "offense" God was referring to in this passage. Remember, God said He would only return when "they acknowledge their offense," and seek His face. So, what offense is this? The answer is obvious to even the most casual Bible reader. Jesus told us the answer in Luke 19:43-44, as we discussed earlier in our study.

> And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,
>
> Saying, **If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day,**

> **the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.**
>
> For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,
>
> And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**
>
> -Luke 19:41-44

So, their offense was not recognizing the time of their Messianic visitation. And not recognizing Him as their Messiah – even after He had given them the Daniel 9:25 prophecy to try to ensure they'd be ready for His arrival right on time! They were given the exact timeline, and yet still somehow missed it! Because of this, Jesus pronounced corporate blindness upon Israel, and the past two thousand years have illustrated this to be evident. The Jews as a whole, still do not recognize their Messiah – even after all this time. Jesus says something similar in Matthew 23:37-29.

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
>
> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.
>
> For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till** ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
>
> -Matthew 23:37-39

Here, Jesus's love for His people, the Jews, becomes tangible. His grief and concern are obvious, as He expresses the tragedy of all history "and ye would not." If they would have accepted Him at His First Coming, He would have "gathered" them like a hen does her chicks under His rule and given them their ultimate anticipation – the Messianic Kingdom. But because of their rejection of Him, the

Kingdom went into postponement (not cancellation!), and God instead introduced His interim plan called the Church.

But notice that in this passage, Jesus alludes to the Second Coming in a way similar to the Hosea passage, saying "Ye shall not see me … *till* ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in in the name of the Lord." This was a Messianic phrase found in Psalm 118:26, with which the Jews were to welcome the Messiah when He came. This is parallel to what is conveyed in Hosea 5:15 – that Christ's return is predicated on their recognition of Him as Messiah. Also, the reference to Israel's "house being left desolate" seems to be a reference to the departure of God's presence from the Temple, as God's program fully switched from Israel over to the Church Age following their rejection of Him as their Messiah. The New Testament tells us that instead, in the Church Age, our bodies are the "Temple" of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, et al.).

But all of these prophecies referring to the seventieth week that we've read in Daniel, Zechariah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and many more that we haven not read, all declare that through their time of Tribulation, there will come a point where the Jews would repent, acknowledge Him, and be saved! Bringing national Israel to repentance in order to then come to rescue them from destruction is one of God's main purposes for this final "week" on His calendar for Israel. He will get Israel back!

Let's review these prophecies. (Keep in mind, the following are just a few we have looked at. There are many, many more prophecies in the Bible that also communicate this same message of Israel turning to God and being delivered at the end of the Tribulation.) Let's review.

- The passage in Daniel (Daniel 12:1) declares that, "at that time (the context being the end of the Tribulation) thy people shall be delivered."

- The passage in Zechariah (Zechariah 13:8-9) declares that God would save the remnant one-third of the Jewish nation

out of the coming time of trouble – "they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

- The passage in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 30:7 – the "time of Jacob's trouble") declares that "he (referring to "Jacob," or Israel) shall be saved out of it."

- The passage in Hosea (Hosea 5:15) declares, "I will go and return to my place, *till* they acknowledge their offense…" It says that in their affliction (meaning the Tribulation), they will seek Him. The word "til", or "until" clearly implies that when they do acknowledge their offense, He will return for them and save them.

Exploring this passage further, we can understand how clear this is, as the next chapter – Hosea Chapter 6 – begins by saying the following.

> Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
>
> **After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up,** and we shall live in his sight.
>
> -Hosea 6:1-2

It is also interesting that the Hosea passage says, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." In other places in scripture, one day is used as an idiom for a thousand years (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). How long has it been since Jesus proclaimed corporate blindness upon the Jews after they rejected their Messiah? About two thousand years – or "two days." Is the "third day" an idiom for the Millennium, when Christ will reign on earth and restore Israel to godliness? This is very likely.

So, we constantly see this same theme in Biblical prophecy – a remnant of rebellious Israel will repent and turn to her true Messiah

at the end of the Tribulation, prompting His return to restore them physically and spiritually, and then inaugurate His Millennial Kingdom. This is Israel's future in God's plan. Although Israel is currently in a state of rebellion, God will get her back, but it will take the Tribulation period to do it. God is not finished with Israel! This can further be summarized in the following passage from Isaiah 54, speaking of the end-time restoration of Israel.

> For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.
>
> For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.
>
> **For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.**
>
> **In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.**
>
> -Isaiah 54:5-8

We see from this the entire panorama of Israel's history, which was prophetically given hundreds of years before Christ's First Coming. God prophetically laid out how He would for a time turn His attention away from Israel after the nation's rejection of Him as Messiah, and they would be forced to endure a period of wrath. But He makes clear that at the end of it all, He would regather them in kindness and mercy.

Recall the earlier passage we looked at that records Jesus's lament in Matthew 23:37 – declaring His desire to gather them as a nation back then at His First Coming, but they wouldn't have Him. They failed the test at His First Coming. Yet, hundreds of years earlier here in Isaiah (and many other places), He was already declaring His intention to ultimately regather them in the end, as through the wrath of the Tribulation, they will finally receive Him at His Second Coming.

A few verses later in Isaiah 54, God says:

> For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.
>
> -Isaiah 54:10

So, we see the same everlasting nature of God's unconditional covenant promises to Israel shown here. God tells Israel that the mountains and hills will be removed from the earth before His covenant with Israel could ever be removed. God then finishes out this chapter by declaring the everlasting principle of His preservation of Israel.

> No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.
>
> -Isaiah 54:17

This concept is also amazingly summarized prophetically in Deuteronomy 4. In Verses 25-31, Israel's future history as a nation is detailed before they even entered the Promised Land – foretelling their future apostasy, exile, scattering among the nations, suffering during the Tribulation, and then ultimate spiritual restoration in fulfillment of God's covenant promises.

> When you father children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, so as to provoke him to anger,
>
> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed.

> And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.
>
> And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.
>
> But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.
>
> When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice.
>
> For the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.
>
> -Deuteronomy 4:25-31 (ESV)

We are clearly told that they will have to go through the Tribulation due to their apostate condition, and yet God also promises that He will not leave them, nor destroy them, nor would He forget (or go back on) the covenant He made with their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He says that they will return to God in the latter days, and realize the fulfillments of all of God's covenants, which we know from other passages will take place during the Millennial Kingdom.

This same panorama of history is also clearly prophesied of in Deuteronomy 30 as well, showing how Israel would be scattered among the nations due to their disobedience, would be gathered in repentance and brought back to possess the land in faith in fulfillment of God's promises.

This entire idea of God keeping his covenant promises to Israel is one of the major reasons for Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. John, in his apocalyptic vision in Revelation, describes this event.

> And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **Faithful** and **True,** and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
>
> -Revelation 19:11

Why is Christ called "Faithful and True?" Because this is Him coming back to save the Jewish remnant that had turned to Him, in order to keep His covenants with Israel. He is Faithful and True to His unconditional covenant promises. Jesus in Matthew 24 had told us that if He didn't return, no flesh would be saved. In other words, if this time period of Tribulation was allowed to continue past its allotted time, all people on earth – and certainly the Jewish remnant – would be destroyed (Matthew 24:22). And if there is no Jewish remnant remaining, then God couldn't fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. So, in order to fulfill His promises, His Second Coming is necessary. This Faithful and True covenant-keeping God will return as a Conquering King to save this remnant and then bring them into the Millennial Kingdom, in which all of His promises will be kept.

So, we need to recognize that Daniel's seventieth week has absolutely nothing to do with the Church, but everything to do with God's future plan to save a righteous remnant of national Israel, while also pouring out judgment upon the wicked. This is the entire point we've been trying to illuminate, and everything up to this point in our review has been to elucidate this point.

So, let's summarize. We must remember that, according to Daniel, the seventy weeks are specifically designated for the Jews and Jerusalem – not the Gentiles or the Church. We see that when the first sixty-nine weeks for Israel were active, the Church was not on the scene. But the same year the sixty-nine weeks ended – 33 AD, – the Church then began almost immediately after on Pentecost. Israel's clock stopped and the Church's clock began. The Church was God's interim program that God inaugurated after national Israel rejected her Messiah. This is the time we are living in presently – which we call the Church Age.

The Rapture of the Church, or supernatural removal of the Church from Earth, will be the event that stops the Church's clock - permanently. But as we've discussed here, when the seventieth week begins, Israel's clock will resume until its completion at the Second Coming – which will take place at the end of the seventieth week.

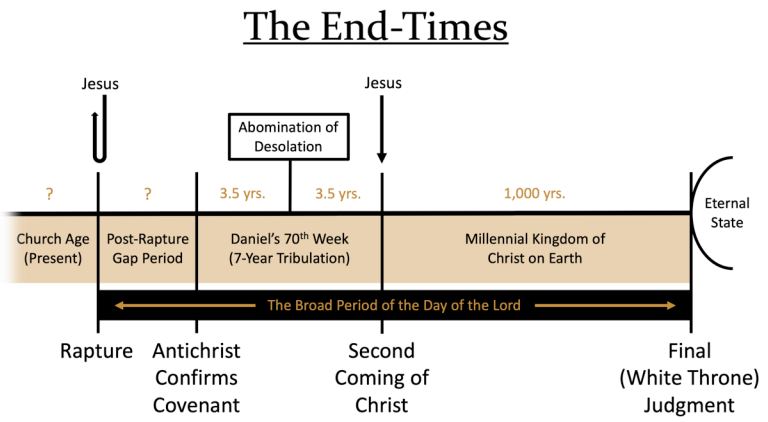
Our in-depth exploration of this seventieth week and its purposes

for Israel should help sharpen our understanding of these points. In the next subsection, we will shift our focus towards demonstrating that the Church's clock will stop **prior to the beginning of the seventieth week** – at the pretribulational Rapture.

The Church Will End Prior to the Seventieth Week

So far, we have discussed Daniel's first sixty-nine weeks, which began with Artaxerxes' command to rebuild Jerusalem in 444 BC and ended with the Triumphal Entry in 33 AD. When these weeks ended, God's interim program (the Church) almost immediately began (about fifty days later on Pentecost). We then discussed Daniel's future seventieth week, which will begin with the Antichrist confirming a covenant. He will then break the covenant at the midpoint. This week will then conclude with the Second Coming of Christ.

We have shown how the first sixty-nine weeks and the seventieth week are designated for Israel, and have nothing to do with the Church. In fact, we have already alluded to several reasons that show the Church and the seventieth week to be completely incompatible. The Church will be raptured prior to the beginning of this final week – an event we term the pretribulational Rapture. Understanding this outline of eschatology helps us recognize how distinct and mutually exclusive Israel and the Church really are in God's plan.



In this subsection, we will explore this idea of the pretribulational Rapture of the Church, and will offer a number of Biblical evidences that corroborate it. The importance of understanding this goes hand in hand with the recognition that Israel and the Church are mutually exclusive. If you recognize their mutual exclusivity, then based on Daniel 9:24's description of the seventy weeks as specifically being designated for Israel, then it should be clear that the seventy weeks and the Church are mutually exclusive. This itself is one of the reasons that necessitate the pretribulational removal of the Church from earth in order for God to begin Israel's final week. God will not reinitiate His program for Israel until His program for the Church has been concluded (at the Rapture).

There are many other scriptural proofs for a pretribulational Rapture. Although this subject is extensive enough to be a full series of studies on its own, we will briefly summarize five additional points of evidence.

#1 – The Church is Exempt From Eschatological Wrath

The Tribulation is the culminating subset within the judgment phase of the broad Day of the Lord. The idea of this whole period being the wrath of God is shown most plainly in Revelation 6, as the

Sixth Seal opens and even the wicked earth dwellers finally recognize that they've been experiencing God's wrath. The people of earth cry out in fear.

> And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb:**
>
> **For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?**
>
> -Revelation 6:16-17

The wrath (the judgment phase of the broad Day of the Lord – which includes the Tribulation) didn't just begin with the opening of the Sixth Seal - it began with the opening of the First Seal. Why? **Because Jesus is the one in heaven opening the seals and releasing these wrathful judgments** (Revelation 6 and following)! They are all part of the "wrath of the Lamb."

But here is what we're really getting at: the Bible clearly teaches that believers escape *before* the time of God's wrath. They don't experience any of the judgments of this period. In other words, the Church is caught up in the Rapture prior to any of the judgments of God's wrath that get poured out upon the earth. Consider the following points.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, Paul tells the Church that Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.

> And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even **Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**
>
> -1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Notice that this says Jesus *delivered* us (*past* tense) from the wrath to come (future tense). When we were saved and we entered into the body of Christ or the Church, that salvation brought with it an exemption from the coming time of wrath. **It doesn't say God will bring us**

through the wrath in the future – it says He has already saved us from it altogether.

Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul says:

> **For God hath not appointed us to wrath,** but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
>
> -1 Thessalonians 5:9

So, we again find it clearly taught that we are not appointed to wrath. The Tribulation is the culmination of God's time of wrath for those that dwell on the earth (as we will see even more clearly in the following passage). If we are not appointed to wrath, then our being on earth during the coming time of wrath is irreconcilable.

And most convincing yet, in Revelation 3:10, the Lord Himself promised to keep us from the *time* of the Tribulation altogether. Jesus, speaking to the Church at Philadelphia says:

> Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, **I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world,** to try those who dwell on the earth.
>
> -Revelation 3:10

There's simply *no way* to interpret this to mean God will preserve us *through* the Tribulation. **It specifically says God will keep us from even the time of the Tribulation.** We won't be here to experience it. Notice also that it says the hour of trial is coming on the whole world and will affect all those who dwell on the earth. The only way then for the Church to be untouched by this hour of trial is for them to be removed from the earth prior to it.

Of course, the Church – like anyone else – will endure normal tribulations of life (lowercase "t"), but the Church is exempt from *the* Tribulation (uppercase "T") – and the entire judgment phase of the broad Day. We will experience none of it.

#2 – The Rapture is a Comfort

In 1 Thessalonians 4:18, after giving us the promise of the Rapture in the previous several verses, Paul then follows this up by saying:

> Wherefore **comfort** one another with these words.
> -1 Thessalonians 4:18

We find that the Rapture is intended to be a *comfort* to us. Only a pretribulational Rapture is truly a comfort, since it is the only view that includes a rescue of the Church out of this world prior to the outpouring of God's wrath during the broad Day of the Lord. This will be a time of unparalleled distress on earth.

If the Rapture doesn't take place until sometime during this period of Tribulation, or especially until the end of the Tribulation, how could it provide us with any comfort? It would be like saying, "Be comforted that those of you who endure through the worst distress in all of earth's history, who do not get decapitated by the Antichrist, will get raptured at the end of it." Obviously, that's not a comforting promise at all - nor does it make any sense.

And so, this description of the Rapture as a comfort supports the earlier passages that detail our exemption from this coming time of wrath altogether – all requiring a pretribulational Rapture. When we study the Tribulation in the broad Day of the Lord, we can all be comforted by the teaching that we will be rescued prior to it. We will experience none of its judgments. All other Rapture views require Christians to participate in at least part of this time period.

#3 – The Church is Not Mentioned in Revelation Chapters 5-19

The Church is conspicuously absent from the portion of the book of Revelation that discusses the eschatological judgments taking place on the earth during the broad Day of the Lord (Chapters 5-19). However, *before* this, the word "Church" is prominently mentioned (twenty-two times in Chapters 1-3). It's not mentioned again (in the

context of being on earth during God's wrath) for the remainder of the book.

Revelation 1 provides for us an outline of the book as a whole. John is told to:

> Write the things which thou **hast seen,** and the things **which are,** and the things **which shall be hereafter;**
>
> -Revelation 1:19

This allows us to recognize the three divisions of the book. It is divided into the "things which thou hast seen," the "things which are," and the "things which shall be hereafter." David Hocking writes:

> In Revelation 1:19 we have an outline of the book given to us: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."
>
> This threefold outline includes the vision of our resurrected Lord in chapter 1 as "the things which thou hast seen"; the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 as "the things which are" (meaning – existing in John's day); and from chapter 4, verse 1, to the end of the book – 'the things which shall be hereafter.'
>
> The word "hereafter" (Greek: *meta tauta*) or "after these things" (following the "things which thou hast seen" and the "things which are") is an important clue to the order of things in this book.
>
> We read in Revelation 4:1: "After this' (Greek: *meta tauta*) and at the end of the verse the word "hereafter" (Greek: *meta tauta*). It would appear, therefore, that the third part of the outline of the Book of Revelation begins with Revelation 4:1 and continues to the end of the book. These events follow the "things which are" or the messages to the seven churches existing in John's day.[16]

Revelation 4:1, where the apostle John is "caught up" to heaven at the sound of a trumpet, seems to be a type or shadow of the Rapture. John, as a representative of the Church at large, was brought up into heaven to see what would take place *meta tauta*, or "after these things."

After what things? After the "things which are," or the Church Age. In other words, he's shown what takes place after the Rapture.

What happens after this in Revelation is the beginning of the broad Day of the Lord, and that's what John records. From heaven, John and the elders are able to witness the judgments of this period occurring "below" on earth. Chapters 6-19 describe the judgments of the Day of the Lord, and the Church is completely absent of mention.

Further, the Twenty-Four Elders, which many Biblical scholars conclude can only be a picture of the glorified Church, is already in heaven in Chapter 4 *before* the seven-sealed scroll is opened, producing the Day of the Lord judgments that begin on earth.[17] So, we continue to find that the concept of the Church on earth is incompatible with the broad Day of the Lord and Tribulation period.

Some have mistakenly concluded that the various mentions of "Tribulation saints" in these chapters of Revelation are equivalent to the Church. This is not the case. There will be saints present during the Tribulation in the same way that there were Old Testament saints present before the Church existed. This does not refer in any way to the Church. Again, the Church is nowhere mentioned by name after Chapter 3, yet is mentioned many times by name in the first three chapters.

One point that helps clarify this distinction is that Jesus told us the gates of hell would not prevail over the Church (Matthew 16:16-17). Yet, in the Tribulation, Satan's man of the hour – the Antichrist – is said to prevail over the saints on the earth at that time and conquer them (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7). Clearly, either the Bible is contradictory or the believers being discussed in these two passages are different. There will be many who come to faith in Jesus during the Tribulation, but they should not be confused with the Church, and Revelation never refers to them as the Church. The explicit mentions of the Church abruptly stop at Chapter 3.

#4 – The Imminence of the Rapture

The Rapture is continuously described in the Bible as an immi-

nent event – meaning it can occur at any moment, with no preconditions. There are no signs or warnings – it takes place suddenly. This logically requires that nothing has to happen before the Rapture can take place. If there were necessary preconditions or events, it couldn't be truly imminent. This is why scripture constantly tells us to wait and watch for the Rapture, and gives us the impression that it can happen at any moment. It is always to be seen as the "next event" on the prophetic horizon concerning God's end-times program.

Renald Showers gives an excellent overview of the scriptural usage of the term "imminence."

> The English word "imminent" comes from the Latin verb "immineo, imminere," which means to "overhand" or "project". In light of this, the English word "imminent" means "hanging over one's head, ready to befall or overtake one; close at hand in its incidence." Thus, an imminent event is one that is always hanging overhead, and is constantly ready to befall or overtake a person. Other things **may** happen before the imminent event, but nothing **must** take place before it happens. If something else must take place before an event can happen, that event is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency.[18]

This characteristic of imminency demands that the Rapture take place prior to the broad Day of the Lord (which the Tribulation is a subset of). If on the other hand, the Rapture couldn't occur until the middle or end of the Tribulation, then that would contradict this characteristic of imminence since other predicted events must take place first. Wayne A. Brindle writes:

> The term "imminence" (or imminency) as applied to the Rapture of the Church means that Christ may return at any moment for His Church, and no biblically predicted event must necessarily precede it. Those who believe that Christ will return for His Church before the Tribulation normally hold that the Rapture is imminent – that it may

occur at any time and that it is the next predicted event in God's prophetic timetable.[19]

Just a few of the many "imminency passages" in the New Testament include the following. The Bible says that Jesus's return is *at hand*, and we are to wait eagerly for it (Romans 8:19-25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:5; Jude 21). "At hand" conveys the idea of imminence. If other events (such as the Tribulation and the arrival of the Antichrist) had to occur first before the Rapture could take place, then imminence language such as "at hand" could not be used to describe it.

James encourages us to "be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is *near*" (James 5:8). Revelation 1:3 and 22:10 also say that *"the time is near."* Again, "near" is another example of imminence language. If the Rapture could not take place until the end of the Tribulation, for example, then it could not be described as being "near," or able to befall at any moment. Other prophetic events would have to precede it chronologically. Much more can be said on this issue of imminence, which is taught all throughout the New Testament.

The pretribulational Rapture is the only view that allows for the Rapture to be imminent in its timing. All the other views require a number of prophetic events to take place first before the Rapture can occur. To be looking for the imminent return of Christ on an "any day" basis (as the New Testament teaches), you have to believe in a pretribulational Rapture. Think about that for a moment. No other Rapture view believes that Jesus can come back today.

#5 – The Many Scriptural Differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming

Many unreconcilable distinctions exist between the Bible's description of the Rapture and its description of the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. These distinctions indicate that the two are

different events happening at different times, which would specifically contradict the idea of a posttribulational Rapture.

- The central passages dealing with the Rapture are John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

- The central passages dealing with the Second Coming to earth are Zechariah 14:1-21, Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Luke 21:25-27, and Revelation 19.

A careful examination of these texts will show that there is enough reason to conclude that the Rapture and the Second Coming to earth are not the same event. Let's examine a brief list of some of the major points of contrast.

- **Meeting Christ in the air versus returning with Christ**

The Rapture verses say that when Jesus comes, He comes in the air. Believers are caught up from the ground into the air to be with Christ, and are taken to the Father's house in heaven. But in the Second Coming verses, the opposite order occurs, with Jesus coming down to the earth while bringing His saints with Him, and His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives.

Furthermore, let's look at the location of believers during these events. In the Rapture verses, the believers are brought up from the earth to heaven to be with Jesus. But in the Second Coming verses, when Jesus comes back to earth from heaven with the believers with him, there are believers (Tribulation saints) still on the earth.

If the Rapture and the Second Coming are the same event, then if Jesus brought all the believers up at the Rapture, how could there be believers still on the Earth at the Second Coming? A significant time lapse would've had to occur between the Rapture and Second Coming for so many people to come to belief in Jesus as Savior. So, again,

these contradictory descriptions force us to understand these to be two separate and distinct events.

- **A mystery event versus an event known and expected throughout Old Testament Prophecy**

In the Rapture verses, the catching away or gathering of the saints to Christ is described as a mystery that Paul was revealing.

In John 14 (the "Upper Room Discourse") and possibly even in a vaguer sense in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus had introduced the basic concept of the Rapture in "seed form." He expressed it as a rescue of the righteous, who would be brought to the Father's house in heaven prior to a time of imminent distress. But it was Paul who later expounded upon this promise, revealing it as a doctrine that we can now more fully understand. Paul described the full unveiling of this Rapture doctrine as a "mystery" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). As mentioned earlier, a mystery in the Greek Biblical sense means a concept that was previously unknown, but now revealed.[20]

Posttribulationists suggest that Jesus's description of a future "gathering of His elect" at His Second Coming (in Matthew 24) refers to the Rapture. Many people confuse this gathering of the elect with the Rapture, as the language sounds similar. But if Paul, who wrote much later on, was the first to reveal in detail this mystery doctrine of the gathering of the Church at the Rapture, than the gathering described by Jesus at the Second Coming would seem to be referring to something else. Paul couldn't have revealed it as a mystery if it was already described in detail by Jesus long before.

It turns out that this gathering of the elect described by Christ in Matthew 24 is a familiar prophetic event to anyone who knows their Old Testament well – it refers to the re-gathering of Israel in faith in preparation for blessing after the Tribulation as the Millennial Kingdom is about to be established (cf. Isaiah 27:12-13; 43:5-7; et al.).

And so, the mystery nature of the Rapture of the Church contradicts the well-known nature of the prophetic gathering of Israel at the Second Coming, helping us recognize their distinction as separate

events. These are just a few of the many Biblical differentiators between the Rapture and the Second Coming, helping us recognize that they are two different events happening at two different times.

And so, these five points of evidence we've just examined serve to anchor and sharpen our perceptions of the distinction between Israel and the Church in God's plan. They clearly demonstrate the way God deals with both entities mutually exclusively within the framework of the seventy-week prophetic outline of God's plan.

While Israel's first sixty-nine weeks were actively ticking away on God's prophetic clock, the Church was nowhere to be found. But as soon as Israel's clock stopped after the completion of the sixty-ninth week, the Church's clock started. The Church's clock though, has a mystery nature – there is no set number of weeks. Instead, the Church's terminal point is this specific event we call the Rapture. When the pretribulational Rapture takes place and the Church is removed from the picture, either immediately or soon after, Israel's clock will again begin as her final week activates.

And so, through a precise and literal reading of all that the Bible has to tell us on this subject, it is not difficult to see the main premises of this study in operation.

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CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

As we begin to close out this study, let's review our initial premises – that Israel and the Church are distinct entities in God's plan, and that God deals with Israel and the Church mutually exclusively. As we've demonstrated throughout our study, Israel and the Church are two separate programs within God's overarching plan for mankind. They are like two trains on separate tracks. It's like a chess-clock. As God's program for Israel is active, the Church is inactive. But when God switches the time-clock over to the Church, Israel becomes inactive.

We demonstrated how clear the Bible is that God made a number of unconditional promises and covenants with Israel that He still intends to keep. God's plan for Israel's future was outlined throughout the Old Testament, especially in the prophets. And in Daniel, we were given a prophetic template that would bring us to the end of this age and would establish the necessary conditions for the inauguration of the age to come – the Millennial Kingdom on earth. This template was then further detailed for us in the New Testament after the interim program called the Church was introduced.

It is incredible how the Bible all falls into place like a puzzle when you put it together correctly. As we've shown, one of the most impor-

tant keys for assembling this puzzle accurately is to keep God's program for Israel distinct from God's program for the Church. If you do not keep them distinct – if you intermingle God's programs for Israel and the Church – it is a certainty that you will not be able to comprehend and rightly divide scripture as a whole. But if you do keep this principle in mind and apply it to your understanding of the scriptures, Bible prophecy will make perfect sense to you, and the puzzle will reveal the amazing picture showing how God's plan will be brought to completion!

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